

JUDAISM

CHANGING FACE OF AMERICAN JUDAISM

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SACRED SURVIVAL: AMERICAN JEWRY'S CIVIL RELIGION

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JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication among Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." *From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

First Reader

We All Believe

No society exists without religion, and this is true of secular societies no less than of those that are overtly “religious.” Observers of the contemporary American scene have noted the emergence of an American civil religion, a body of ideas and ideals shared by virtually all Americans, whatever their formal religious ties may otherwise be.

In the American Jewish community a similar development has been taking place. In his paper, “Sacred Survival: American Jewry’s Civil Religion,” *Jonathan Woocher* sets forth the creed of this American Jewish religion, which characterizes the world-view of virtually all American Jews — Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist and secular.

The Changing Face of American Judaism

Defending Judaism against its detractors is a praiseworthy undertaking, but so are analysis and criticism, which, in the long run, may prove to be more beneficial. This the biblical sage recognized when he declared, “Reprove the wise man and he will love you.”

In his paper, “Orthodoxy In Pleasantdale,” *Edward S. Shapiro* offers his description of “modern Orthodoxy” in a suburban setting, calling attention to its strengths and weaknesses, its achievements and its problems.

Using a different format for his observations, “Two Weeks In May: A Reform Rabbi’s Odyssey,” *Norman Mirsky* shares his critical reflections on contemporary American Judaism, predominantly Reform and Conservative, which he observed during several weeks of an odyssey across the country. It is worth noting that each of these writers is not an outsider engaged in sectarian polemics, but stands firmly within the religious community that he is describing.

While it is generally recognized that Jewish education is the most fundamental activity in Jewish life, it continues to be the most intractable. As a result, the subject is all too often treated in very superficial terms.

A careful analytic survey of Jewish education in America is presented by *Julius Weinberg* in his paper, "The Greening of Jewish Education," in which both the positive and the negative factors are evaluated, and guidelines are suggested for the future.

Can the Holocaust be Expressed?

The rising tide of literature on the Holocaust, which at times threatens to assume the proportions of a flood, poses a familiar paradox. On the one hand, the Holocaust represents a level of human bestiality and human suffering unparalleled in human experience for which our normal vocabulary is all but useless. Hence, its full impact cannot be communicated. On the other hand, the souls of the victims and of the survivors, like that of the suffering Job, cry out for expression, "O Lord, covet not my blood, and let there be no resting place for my cry."

Closely related is a dilemma facing the artist. Can the horror of the Holocaust be a subject matter for art? Does not the artistic treatment of the Holocaust, to the extent that it succeeds, trivialize and even prettify the horror and thus do violence to the truth?

In their paper, "The Audacity of Expressing the Inexpressible: The Relation Between Moral and Aesthetic Considerations in Holocaust Literature" *Zsuzsanna Ozsvath* and *Martha Satz* deal with this problem by discussing three well-known novels, Elie Wiesel's *Night*, Kosinski's *The Painted Bird* and D.M. Thomas' *The White Hotel*.

One Can Always Return

As factionalism and polarization continue to increase in the Jewish community, the luminous figure of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook looms ever larger on the horizon as a symbol of the unity growing out of diversity that we so sorely need. Rabbi Kook, who was the first Chief Rabbi of Palestine under the British Mandate, was an outstanding halakhic authority as well as a profoundly mystical personality. Deeply religious, he reached out to the secular community and understood its needs and problems. Both by word and by example, he pointed out that opposing viewpoints represent partial aspects of the greater whole and, therefore, are ultimately to be subsumed into a higher unity. His writings remain a perpetual source of replenishment for the human spirit.

In his paper, "Rav Kook's Doctrine of Teshuvah," *Lawrence A. Englander* examines Rabbi Kook's concept of repentance, a term which renders very imperfectly the Hebrew word *teshuvah*, "return". He sets forth

the various stages in the process and its two aspects, individual and collective.

The author then proceeds to compare and contrast Rabbi Kook's understanding of *teshuvah* with the analysis of the distinguished student of mysticism, Evelyn Underhill, who presents the classical Christian understanding of the subject.

Plus ça change . . .

If we were asked to suggest an example of a homogeneous nation-state with one, all-pervasive culture uniting the citizenry, most of us would probably propose France. That country would seem to stand in stark contrast to the United States, with the current stress upon ethnic pride and cultural pluralism, or Great Britain with Scots and Welsh separatism, not to speak of Protestant Ulster.

Widespread as this conception of the French polity may be, *Judith Friedlander* maintains that it is mistaken. Her essay, "*Juif ou Israélite?* The Old Jewish Question in Contemporary France," calls attention to various sub-cultures struggling for recognition and support. Her principal concern is with the rise of Jewish ethnic pride and group identification, which recalls similar attempts to build a Jewish secular culture in eastern Europe in the years following the First World War.

She also describes the various patterns of "return to Judaism" that have found spokesmen in contemporary France. They constitute a spectrum of the various paradigms of Jewishness being offered to the modern Jew, not only in France but in the United States and, indeed, throughout the world.

This emergence of France as an unexpected center for Jewish life in the post World War II period is due to a confluence of three major causes — the Nazi onslaught on European Jewry, the emergence of the State of Israel, and the impact of the various groups of North African Jewry, predominantly Sephardic in background, upon the French Jewish environment.

In her review-essay, "France — An Unexpected Center for Jewish Life," *Frances Malino* reviews several significant works dealing with some aspects of this larger theme, such as the Vichy government and its relationship to Jews, the religious, cultural and social background of Moroccan Jewry, and the various profiles of French Jews today.

No observer of world Jewry in 1945 would have expected that, through the arcane workings of history, a new, active and conscious Jewish community, the largest in Europe, would emerge on French soil.

That World is Gone

Throughout the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, Polish Jewry was the heart of the Jewish people. It supplied the

human resources for all other Jewish communities in western Europe, South Africa, South America, the United States and Israel. It was the home of every significant cultural and religious movement in modern Jewish life. With the cunning of a maniac, Hitler reached for the jugular of the Jewish people by concentrating upon the liquidation of Polish Jewry.

Three works have recently appeared dealing with various phases of the contribution that this great creative community made to the treasure-house of the Jewish spirit. They are the subject of a review-essay, "Jewish Poland As It Was," by *Leon Shapiro*.

It is with deep regret that we note Professor Shapiro's recent passing. This essay may well have been the latest contribution of this important scholar to Jewish culture.

What Chosenness Means Today

A fundamental belief of traditional Judaism that refuses to die is the idea of the Chosen People. It continues to hold its place in the world-view of Jews of every religious group and is maintained also by many Jews of a secular outlook.

The role that this concept occupies among American Jews is discussed by *Jonathan Sarna* in "Chosenness On Our Mind," a review-essay of *Arnold Eisen's* book, *The Chosen People in America: A Study in Jewish Religious Ideology*.

Erratum

In the translation by Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser of Rabbi Abraham I. Kook's "On the Art of Criticism" (JUDAISM, Summer 1984, p. 343), the source of the famous talmudic statement, "These and also those are the words of the living God" is given erroneously. The correct source is *Eruvin* 13b. We thank Rabbi Israel C. Stein for calling this error to our attention.

R.G.

We note with sorrow the passing of an honored and valued member of our Board of Contributing Editors, Professor Selig Adler. He was a distinguished American historian, a man of extraordinary integrity, and a devoted Jew.

Yehi zikhro barukh.

Sacred Survival: American Jewry's Civil Religion

JONATHAN S. WOOCHEER

SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF ROBERT BELLAH'S seminal essay in 1967, the concept of "civil religion" has become a widely-used rubric for exploring the religious dimensions of public (i.e., political) life. Bellah portrayed an American polity which understands, celebrates, and at times judges itself in terms of a distinctive religious vision of its own destiny and meaning on the stage of history.¹ But America has hardly been unique in this respect, and the notion of civil religion has proven a fertile one in settings far removed from Bellah's original focus of concern.

American Jews are not a sovereign political entity, but they do constitute a special type of collectivity, one which is appropriately defined as both a voluntary polity and a moral community. As a moral community America's Jews form a group which perceives itself as united for moral purposes beyond the satisfaction of material needs. They view themselves (as America views itself) through a religious prism, as the bearers of a special mission and place in history. To effect and express this unique communal self-understanding, American Jewry has organized itself as a voluntary polity, a matrix of institutions and agencies which carry out a public agenda of activities analogous to those of a national government.² Serving today as the "framing institutions" of this polity are the Jewish Federations found in almost every locality with a population of more than a few hundred Jews. As their generic name implies, these Federations began as leagues of charitable organizations, coming together for combined fund-raising and limited coordination of services. Over the course of the last half-century, both the power and the functional responsibilities of these Federations have grown enormously. Today, they plan and coordinate organized Jewish activity in virtually every sphere of communal

1. Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *DAEDALUS*, 96, No. 1 (Winter 1967): 1-21.

2. The concept of the American Jewish community as a "voluntary polity" has been developed and elaborated by Daniel J. Elazar in his book, *Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976). On the emergence of Federations as the polity's "framing institutions" see Elazar's *Participation and Accountability in the Jewish Community* (New York: Council of Jewish Federations and Association of Jewish Community Organization Personnel, 1982).

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concern: health and social welfare, community relations, support for Israel and Jewish communities abroad, Jewish education and cultural development. The Federations are charged with the responsibility of raising the hundreds of millions of dollars which fuel the Jewish communal enterprise, and a host of Jewish agencies, operating on both the local and national levels, are linked to the Federation system financially, programmatically, and through overlapping leadership. The local Federations are themselves confederated nationally to form a country-wide institutional complex.

The American Jewish civil religion is, first and foremost, the operative religion of this polity — legitimating its activities, expressing and preserving its understanding of the meaning and mandates of the Jewish tradition. However, just as American civil religion is not the province of political leaders alone, what we will describe is far more than simply an institutional ideology. The American Jewish civil religion serves also as the faith which binds American Jewry as a whole together in a moral community, and which enables that community to locate itself in relationship to the Jewish past, present, and future.

The Evolution of the American Jewish Civil Religion

The current American Jewish civil religion is the product of an evolutionary process which has woven together strands from what has been called American Jewish folk religion and from elite ideologies which have been affirmed by important segments of American Jewry's institutional leadership.³ These "elite" components represent the latest version of a philanthropic approach which has evolved considerably during the course of the twentieth century. American Jewish communal leaders (and American Jews in general) have always prided themselves on "taking care of their own" and on more than pulling their own weight in American society, and one of American "civil Judaism's" enduring myths is the story of the pledge ostensibly made by the first Jewish settlers in New Amsterdam in 1654 that they would not permit any one of their brethren to become a public charge. Coupled with this has been a sense of responsibility assumed by relatively fortunate American Jews for the security and welfare of co-religionists in other lands, manifested as early as the mid-nineteenth century.

These responsibilities were accepted by the American Jewish communal elite because they were consistent with their own conceptions of Judaism, presented a positive image of Jews, and could be exercised in the best spirit of Americanness. This desire to affirm the Jew's place qua

3. For a discussion of American Jewish folk religion and its relationship to elite formulations of Judaism, see Charles Liebman, *The Ambivalent American Jew: Politics, Religion, and Family in American Jewish Life* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973).

Jew in the American enterprise has been the civil religion's most enduring theme. In the early years of the twentieth century it sustained a three-element program of leadership activity, best exemplified, perhaps, in the lives of men like Louis Marshall and Jacob Schiff. For these men and their like — the founders of the American Jewish Committee and major donors to the early federation campaigns — the obligations of Jewishness included support of the needy, protection of Jewish rights (in America and abroad), and assistance to new immigrants in the process of "Americanization," of becoming educated, successful, contributing citizens like themselves. Although their "civil Judaism" was respectful of Jewish tradition, it placed little emphasis on extensive knowledge or observance of that tradition. It was concerned primarily with insuring the adjustment of Jews to the American environment and demonstrating the compatibility of Jewishness with American cultural norms. Hence, Jewish traditions and rituals which were incompatible with American cultural norms — observance of the Sabbath and dietary laws, for example — were deemed unnecessary, if not barriers, to integration.

The folk religion which the masses of Jewish immigrants brought with them from Eastern Europe was quite different in character from this civil religious ideology. It was grounded in a powerful sense of what we would today call Jewish ethnicity, even nationality, a framework for group self-definition and a sense of shared destiny with which the established communal leadership was uncomfortable. Only a minority of immigrant Jews were observant by Orthodox standards, but they shared a richer awareness and deeper ties to traditional Jewish culture and its values and folkways than did the already highly Americanized native communal leadership.

Yet the immigrants and, especially, their children also shared the basic goal of their "uptown" counterparts: to succeed as Americans. Slowly, but quite surely, a process of synthesis began to take hold. Even before World War I, Louis Brandeis had been able to present Zionism — which had broad appeal among the Eastern European immigrants but was ideologically anathema to many of the leadership establishment — as compatible with good Americanness. A Jew who supported Zionism, he argued, was demonstrating his commitment to the values that were central to the American dream, the same values which were being applied to the upbuilding of Palestine. Naturally, it was not expected that American Jews would emigrate to Palestine, but, as Americans, they must assume a responsibility for insuring the success of the Zionist endeavor. In general, during this period, there was a blurring of the lines between aiding "co-religionists" and affirming a sense of peoplehood through assuming responsibility for the welfare of fellow Jews. Philanthropy and the fight against anti-Semitism gradually brought American Jews together across most boundaries of background, religious denomination and ideology. The folk religion embraced Americanization and the elite civil religion

made its peace with the concept of peoplehood. The community, as a whole, dedicated itself to the ideal of full participation in American life, and defined and shaped the Jewish tradition in such a way as to provide maximal support for this venture.

The most recent phase in the evolution of American Jewish civil religion has by no means abandoned this legacy. But it has amplified what was, perhaps, an undertone and made it a dominant note in its embrace of Jewish survival as the organized community's overriding goal. Two events — the murder of six million European Jews and the creation of the State of Israel — coupled with an urge to maintain a recognizable Jewish presence on the American canvas have propelled a collective redefinition of the communal mission. The tenets of the polity's civil religion are today largely built around what the theologian, Emil Fackenheim, calls contemporary Judaism's "614th commandment": Thou shalt not give Hitler a posthumous victory by permitting Jewish survival to be endangered again.⁴ Yet, true to its origins and the deepest feelings of its adherents, civil Judaism remains very much an American, and an America-affirming, faith.

The Tenets of the American Jewish Civil Religion

The articles of faith of the civil religion are linked to the philanthropic and political ethos of the communal institutional system, thereby legitimating the activist program of the polity and its leaders. Many of the tenets of the American Jewish civil religion represent easily recognizable restatements of classical Jewish religious values. American Jewish civil religion has selected and adapted these for use in contexts heavily affected by the process of secularization and fashioned them into a coherent modern faith, one rooted in popular Jewish sentiment, resonating with the Jewish tradition, and sufficiently flexible to embrace diverse private Jewish convictions and commitments which lie beyond its own scope. There are seven such tenets:

1. The Unity and Distinctiveness of the Jewish People

The Jews constitute a single, unique people. The category of "peoplehood" is one which satisfies the desire of American Jews to assert a common Jewish identity which is rooted in something more than, or an alternative to, shared religious conviction. (Indeed, conventional theistic faith is not even regarded as a requisite for membership in the Jewish collectivity.) At the same time, it permits these Jews to continue to assert their nationality (not to mention citizenship) as Americans. The Jewish people is one, and it has a homeland — Israel. But Jews may live anywhere and be part of that people.

4. Emil Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

The American Jewish civil religion strongly affirms what Simon Herman calls alignment over space and time on the basis of "interdependence of fate."⁵ As a people, Jews share not only a common history, but a common destiny. This is the foundation for the civil Jewish emphasis on identification with all of world Jewry, regardless of differences in circumstances or lifestyle. *K'lal Yisrael* — the communality of all Jews — is a primary value in this religious system. Undoubtedly, some elements of *noblesse oblige* remain in the extraordinary efforts which the organized community mounts to help Jews in need throughout the world, yet, what is stressed is not merely their need, but that they are fellow Jews and, therefore, entitled to the support of their brethren.

For American Jewish civil religion, Jews constitute not only one people, but a unique people. The sense of Jewish distinctiveness is compounded out of several elements: the particularity of Jewish history, the condition of isolation which the State of Israel suffers in the world community, and the commitment to extraordinary achievement in the intellectual and moral realms which, many Jews feel, is shared by their fellows. In effect, this sense of distinctiveness represents a secularization of the traditional Jewish conviction of "chosenness." Like the latter, it is subject to chauvinistic reduction to a feeling of innate superiority, but, in its orthodox civil Jewish articulation, it, too, constitutes primarily an assertion of responsibility and aspiration, an ethical injunction, rather than simply an expression of accomplished fact.

2. Mutual Responsibility

This concept of responsibility is itself one of the hallmarks of the American Jewish civil religion. The Talmudic statement "*Kol Yisrael arei-vin zeh ba-zeh*" — all Jews are responsible for one another — serves as a central dogma of the civil Jewish faith. "Responsibility," in this context, has at least three connotations. First is responsibility for the physical security and well-being of other Jews — protection of their rights and provision for their human needs. This, as we have seen, is an idea which has been part of American Jewish civil religion from its inception. Today, the concept of responsibility extends into a second domain as well: responsibility for insuring that Jews have the opportunity to acquire, express, and transmit a Jewish identity. The notion that Jews are responsible for maintaining what is often referred to as "the quality of Jewish life," has found expression in an expanded assumption of communal responsibility for Jewish educational services — both locally and worldwide.

The third sense in which Jewish "mutual responsibility" is affirmed in the American Jewish civil religion is a good deal more subtle, but is tied even more closely to folk sensibilities. Just as American Jews continue to

5. Simon Herman, *Jewish Identity* (Berkeley: Sage Publications, 1977), p. 43.

feel pride in the achievements of other Jews — achievements which they had no hand in — so, too, they feel, in some way, responsible for the standards of behavior which other Jews maintain. This is more than a matter of shame or fear of opprobrium spilling over onto themselves (though both of these are part of that feeling). It reflects, as well, a larger sense of what it means to be Jewish. Just as the tradition could raise suspicion about the ancestry of a Jew lacking in compassion, American Jews continue to feel that certain patterns of behavior are “unJewish.” Whether it be the readiness to invoke the concept of collective responsibility in the wake of the 1982 massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon (while, at the same time, rejecting the right of non-Jews to render judgment!), or the unusually strong communal anguish felt as cases of wife-beating and child-abuse are discovered among Jews, the signals of this sentiment remain strong. For the civil religion, to be a Jew is to be responsible for, and to, other Jews. This entails a number of specific obligations.

3. Jewish Survival is Endangered

The first and foremost of these obligations is active concern for Jewish survival. One of the assumptions of the civil religion of American Jews, like that of Israel, is that the world is often indifferent, and sometimes hostile, to Jewish survival. The Jewish people dwells not only alone, but under constant threat. The preoccupation of organized American Jewry with anti-Semitism — in the Soviet Union, in Europe, in Argentina, in the Arab world, even in the United States— reflects this underlying world-view.

American Jewish civil religion has absorbed the syndrome which the Jewish philosopher, Simon Rawidowicz, identified in his classic essay “Israel: the Ever-Dying People”⁶ — a conviction that Jewish survival is perpetually threatened and, therefore, must be defended with enormous vigor. The source of the threat, however, is not always external hostility. American Jewry, in particular, is seen as threatened precisely because the environment in which it lives is so hospitable. Here, Jewish identity is under siege from within, rather than from without. America is, indeed, different, but its difference, civil Judaism asserts, is not without a price. This focus on assimilation as a threat to Jewish survival is a relatively recent addition to the American Jewish civil religion. It does not contradict the older fundamental civil Jewish affirmation of America as a *goldene medine* for Jews, and it is consistent with rejection of the Zionist premise that Jewish life cannot survive outside of a Jewish State. What it has done, however, is, in effect, to round out the circle: the specific environment in which Jews live is not determinative of their fate. Jewish survival

6. Simon Rawidowicz, “Israel: The Ever-Dying People,” *Studies in Jewish Thought* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1974), pp. 210-14.

is *always* endangered, if not from one source, then from another. Thus, the life of the Jewish people is a perpetual quest to take control of its own destiny, to insure its own survival by its own strength, and the mission of the American Jewish community must be to carry on that struggle on every front.

4. Support For Israel

Nevertheless, the primary front in that battle for Jewish survival is, in the eyes of most American Jews, the State of Israel. It has been said that American Judaism recognizes only one heresy which subjects the perpetrator to immediate excommunication: denial of support for that State. The role which Israel plays in the civil religion is, indeed, central, though complex. It is, first and foremost, the homeland of the Jewish people. To that extent, those American Jews who proclaim that "we are all Zionists" are speaking truthfully. Support for Israel is predicated, therefore, not simply on its being a land of refuge for persecuted Jews, but on its symbolic significance as the center of the Jewish world. Even more, Israel is the testimony to Jewish vitality, to the people's capacity to triumph over its enemies, to meet and to beat the non-Jewish world on its own terms. For American Jewish civil religion, as much as for the Israeli, the State of Israel is the Jewish people's answer to Hitler, the renewal which makes the tragedy of the Holocaust bearable.

The civil religion of American Jews demands militant and unequivocal support for Israel — financially and politically. And, yet, the vast majority of American Jews, including most of the civil religion's strongest proponents, have no intention of settling in Israel and do not believe that such a decision is necessary in order to be a good Jew.

From the perspective of classical Zionism or Israel's own civil religion,⁷ such a disjunction is virtually unintelligible. But, from the perspective of the civil religion of American Jews, it is quite consistent. Support for Israel testifies to one's loyalty to the Jewish people, to the depth of one's sense of responsibility. But, since the Jewish people is one, that testimony can be offered wherever one lives. Critics have, at times, castigated American Jews for their "checkbook" Judaism, for "Israelolatry," or for placing on Israel the burden of vicariously living out their own Jewishness. All of these charges have a measure of truth. But the dynamic behind them is not selfishness or indolence. Israel is a sacred symbol in the American Jewish civil religion, subject to all of the abuse and misuse which sacred symbols must bear. Precisely because American Jews, unlike Israelis, do not have to deal with the every-day reality of Israel, they often have difficulty in coming to grips with Israel's flaws and shortcomings. Their reluctance to envision settling in Israel may, therefore, be an

7. On Israel's civil religion, see Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

unconscious way of protecting the religious system that they have constructed from the disconcerting and disconfirming impingement of reality.

In prescribing support for Israel, the American Jewish civil religion is trying to insure American Jews a meaningful role in the unfolding of Jewish destiny. But it does not regard Israel's fate as the sum total of that destiny; neither does it view support of Israel as the only religiously significant way of sharing in that destiny. In this respect, the civil religion remains firmly in keeping with its diasporist origins and functional for American Jews. The current rhetoric of community leaders, which emphasizes the concept of "partnership" between Israel and diaspora Jewry, reveals the true world-view and ethos of American civil Judaism. Thus, those who have described Israel as American Judaism's religion are simply mistaking the part for the whole, the single symbol for the system. As important as are Israel and support for it within American Jewish civil religion, they are not its entire substance.

5. Affirmation of Jewish Tradition

American Jewish civil religion has always maintained a respectful, if selective, attitude toward the contents of the classical Judaic tradition. For many years, to be sure, the posture of the organized (non-synagogue) American Jewish community was "secular," at least in its own self-understanding. But, in the American context, secular meant primarily non-denominational rather than anti-religious. Ideological secularists — those with a specific program of transvaluation comparable to that of the socialists or the Zionist pioneers who rebelled against traditional Judaism — never dominated the community or contributed substantially to its civil religion. For many years, American civil Judaism maintained an attitude of what might be termed "benevolent neutrality" toward traditional religious institutions, beliefs, and practices. It related itself primarily to a public agenda which was philanthropic and social in character. While it acknowledged that religious convictions might well undergird the values that it promoted, it neither insisted on the religious character of those values nor did it seek to incorporate traditional religious practices in its set of behavioral norms. American Jewish civil religion always regarded positive Jewish identification as a virtue, but it did not prescribe the form that such identification should take and it viewed the inculcation of such an identification as essentially a private responsibility.

In recent years, this tenet of the civil Jewish faith has undergone substantial modification. Today, American Jewish civil religion has moved from an attitude of benevolent neutrality to one of generalized respect for, and affirmation of, the Jewish tradition. Traditional practices are more extensively incorporated within its own ritual system and, perhaps

most important, transmission of the substance of the tradition is regarded as an essential part of the overall effort to insure Jewish continuity.

The “tradition” which civil Judaism affirms is, of course, a modernized and pluralistic one. It still shies away from attempting to dictate (or even suggest) norms for personal Jewish observance, but it does regard some such observance as valuable, even important. And, in the public domain, its own arena, the civil religion has become noticeably more traditional in character. The governing principle of communal organizational life is to try to avoid activities which would be offensive to observant Jews, such as overt violations of the Sabbath or dietary laws. Even more, opportunities are now provided for the expression of traditional religious values and concerns within what were formerly regarded as “secular” contexts. Thus, Jewish worship and study have made their way into the civil religious behavioral repertoire.

The American Jewish civil religion has redefined its role as a sponsor of Jewish tradition as well. Since it regards the survival of the Jewish people as intimately bound up with (indeed, even dependent upon) the survival of the Jewish religious tradition, it has made the transmission of that tradition a communal responsibility. Because it does not explicitly endorse any specific version of that tradition (in practice, it is probably closest to moderate Conservative), what the civil religion itself transmits as the content of Jewish tradition is “homogenized” and tends to focus on the ethical dimension. But adherents of civil Judaism are now, by and large, prepared to throw the weight of communal endorsement behind a broad range of Jewish educational endeavors — from Reform to Hasidic. Since the civil religion continues to remain largely indifferent to matters of theology, and since it also continues to affirm the legitimacy of religious pluralism and individual choice, it has no real incentive to try to develop an elaborate or formally articulated religious ideology of its own. Instead, it is satisfied to fasten on those elements of traditional Jewish values and practice which all positive Jews seem prepared to endorse. These it incorporates into its own ethos, while remaining open, if institutionally non-committed, to more ideologically focused expressions of Jewish behavior and belief.

6. *Zedakah*: Philanthropy and Social Concern

Of all the values which Jewish tradition embraces, the one which has been most prominent in the civil religion has surely been *zedakah*. As we noted above, the institutional focal point for American Jewish civil religion has been the organizational matrix framed by the local community Federations. In the light of their origins as philanthropic enterprises — and the importance which fund-raising continues to play in their operation — it is not surprising that Federations, and the evolving American Jewish civil religion, have always given *zedakah* a place of prominence in

their value system. The significance of *zedakah* is heightened by the fact that the root meaning of the term is more akin to the concept of “social justice” than of “charity.” Thus, as the primary institutions of the organized community — the Federations and the so-called defense (later community relations) agencies — broadened their program to include participation in the larger struggles for civil and human rights and social justice in American society, *zedakah* remained at the heart of their ideological and Jewish self-understanding.

Today, the civil religion continues to regard *zedakah* as the primary mandate of Jewish tradition and to legitimate much of the activity of the American Jewish polity in terms of it. *Zedakah* is a *mizvah*, a commandment, not an option. Hence, it is the duty of each Jew to participate in the community’s philanthropic work, if only by contributing to the local Federation campaign. For the community as a whole, the work of *zedakah* — “meeting human needs,” as it is often put — is the prime requisite alongside the insurance of Jewish survival itself. Indeed, what prevents the civil religion from becoming pure survivalism is the ethical impulse provided by the commitment to *zedakah*.

The underlying ethos of civil Judaism can be described as one of exemplary ethical responsibility. Because of their history and their values, Jews are expected to be more vigorous in the pursuit of social justice, as well as more generous in their support of those in need, than others. With the recent trend in American Jewish life toward a “turning inward,” a preoccupation with survival and the quality of Jewish life, and a disillusionment with social activism, this component of the civil religion has been weakened. But it has by no means disappeared, just as American Jews continue to be, as a group, far more liberal politically than their socio-economic status would suggest. The easy transference which the civil religion once made between *zedakah* and left-leaning politics has been called into question. Yet, the strong underlying commitment to social justice, and the conviction that it represents a fundamental Jewish value, endure among the leaders of the communal system. At the same time, there has been no diminution in the importance placed on the expression of *zedakah* through help to Jews in need — wherever and however they may live.

Thus, *zedakah* remains the cardinal ethical value of American Jewish civil religion. Both the individual Jew and the community are judged in accordance with their readiness to live up to its standards. One may quarrel with the weight given to this single value as a criterion of Jewishness (especially when it serves to elevate the status of wealthy philanthropists at the expense of others with deeper and fuller Jewish commitments). Still, the prominence of *zedakah* as a value and the belief that Jews should be exemplary in their embodiment of it, have helped to link the civil religion to the traditional Judaic value system and to provide American Jews with a sense of mission and duty which transcends self-perpetuation.

Civil Judaism thereby responds to both the self-interested and the altruistic instincts of a population that is still concerned about its "place" in the world and is still seeking moral self-justification. Jewish survival is not a chauvinistic conceit, but a requisite for the continued fulfillment of the Jewish role as an exemplar of ethical values.

7. Americanness as a Virtue

The tenets of the American Jewish civil religion serve, as we have seen, to define the conditions of Jewish existence in the modern world and the primary mandates for behavior flowing from that world-view. Civil Judaism sees Jewish life as precious, but tenuous. Both the people and its tradition must be preserved and nurtured in the face of threats from without and within. At the same time, Jews must continue to make their survival meaningful by exemplifying the high ethical values of Jewish tradition.

Nothing in all of this is seen as, in any way, calling into question either the possibility or the desirability of full participation by Jews in American society and culture. The civil religion reserves a special place for America amidst the nations of the world. Yes, Jews have known anti-Semitism and discrimination in this country. Yes, assimilation through inter-marriage and the loss of Jewish identity are dangers which must be fought. But, fundamentally, America is different. For all of their anxiety, American Jews believe that this is, in Jewish terms, indeed, a "golden land." If it is not *the* homeland and *the* promised land of the Jewish people, it is still their homeland and promised land in a more immediate sense. And, as we have seen, they are not prepared to leave it.

This is not to say that the relationship of American Jews to America is entirely without ambivalence. For the civil religion, however, the emphasis is not on the doubts, but on the affirmation. American Jews can, and should, fulfill their Jewish destiny and commitments within a mostly benevolent American embrace. America has welcomed the Jews and Judaism. Jews have done well, and they have done good. Like the folk religion, the civil religion proclaims that, by being better Jews, Jews will also be better Americans, and vice versa.

The terms of the "bargain" between America and its Jews are beneficial to both. The civil religion expects Jews to take advantage of the opportunities which America provides, and to use them to help fulfill their Jewish responsibilities. Jews have earned the right to expect America to honor their concerns. In turn, American Jews are more than willing to shoulder their share of the responsibilities of American citizenship and active participation in the life of the nation. Since civil Judaism is modernistic in its approach to Jewish practice and belief, it does not perceive American social and cultural norms as constituting substantial barriers to the expression of Jewishness. If some Jews assimilate to the point of

abandoning their Jewishness all together, that is a problem for Jews to deal with, but it is not a rationale for withdrawing from the larger society. By continuing to play an active role in every phase of American life, Jews will continue to serve their own interests and those of the larger society as well.

This faith in the long-term prospects for Jewish life in America stands behind the civil religion's rejection of the classical Zionist analysis of diaspora Jewish life. In America, it simply does not apply, and American Jews make their best contribution to the Jewish future by remaining where they are, strengthening their community and their position in American society and, with it, their capacity to help other Jewries in need.

Conclusion

American Jewish civil religion is a complex system of ideas and sentiments which helps American Jews define and sustain themselves as a distinctive subcommunity in both American and Jewish life. By providing Jews with a self-understanding which validates their often prodigious organizational endeavors in the sacral vocabulary of mission and destiny, it enables them to mediate between a traditional religious group identity and a secularized life-style. American Jews who accept the tenets of this civil Judaism have confronted the classic modern dilemma of integration vs. group survival and have found a vision of themselves and an ethos of responsible ethical action which purport to resolve that dilemma by embracing both of its poles.

Critics of American civil religion have noted the shallowness of its theology and the danger of its degeneration into mere national self-celebration. American civil Judaism, too, may be a flawed attempt to translate traditional religious conviction and discipline into an acceptable and politically functional idiom for an ethnic community. But, regardless of how it is ultimately judged, American Jewish civil religion has become a major force in shaping the commitments and behavior of American Jews. As the religious ideology of a community which has done both well and good — for itself, its adopted homeland, and its fellow Jews throughout the world — American civil Judaism, its evolution and its fate must be seen as an important chapter in the religious history of both America and the Jewish people in our time.

Orthodoxy In Pleasantdale

EDWARDS. SHAPIRO

PRIOR TO THE 1960S, MOST SOCIOLOGISTS AND historians of American Judaism believed Orthodoxy to be a transient first-generation, urban phenomenon which would not accompany American Jews as they poured onto the crab grass trail, after World War II, to the land of split-level houses, patios, and outdoor barbecues. Thus, Albert I. Gordon's *Jews in Suburbia* (1959) noted that "Jews in suburbia are preponderantly non-Orthodox in religious ideas and practices."¹ The post-war suburbanization of American Jewry was identified with the growth of the Conservative movement whose large temples attracted upwardly mobile professionals in the midst of family formation and the flight from the inner city. They identified Orthodoxy with that from which they were escaping: crowded urban living conditions, their parents' poverty and Yiddish speech, and archaic European religious practices. The Conservative and, to a smaller extent, the Reform movements provided the suburbanites, particularly their young, with a religious and ethnic identity and a decorous and elevated religious rite which comported with their newly acquired economic and social status. Orthodoxy, it was predicted, was fated to become an anachronism, a victim of its own obscurantist ideology, its inability to transplant itself to suburbia, and the inexorable processes of immigrant acculturation.

The last two decades, however, have confounded these prophecies of doom. Orthodoxy has managed to put down roots in the suburbs of virtually all major American cities. For the first time in American history, wrote Solomon Poll in 1969, "second and third generation Jewish Americans followed the social and religious patterns of their parents."² An Orthodox "edifice complex" resulted in the construction of numerous spacious suburban synagogues, day schools, yeshivahs, and mikvehs. The suburbanization of Orthodoxy occurred at the same time as the emergence of the *baal teshuvah* movement, the growing influence of the yeshivah world on American Orthodoxy,³ and the coming to maturity of the

1. Albert I. Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), p. 148; Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 167-71.

2. Solomon Poll, "The Persistence of Tradition: Orthodoxy in America," in Peter I. Rose, ed., *The Ghetto and Beyond: Essays on Jewish Life in America* (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 119.

3. William B. Helmreich, *The World of the Yeshiva: An Intimate Portrait of Orthodox Jewry* (New York: Free Press, 1982).

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children of the Holocaust survivors. These four developments revitalized American Orthodoxy, particularly in the New York area with its many yeshivahs and large Holocaust population.

For the past decade and a half I have lived in the Pleasantdale section of West Orange, New Jersey and have attended Congregation Ahavas Achim, B'nai Jacob and David, the largest Orthodox synagogue in Essex County, which encompasses Newark and its environs. West Orange, located five miles west of Newark and fifteen miles west of New York City, is within five miles of the Garden State Parkway, the state's major north-south highway, while Route 280, one of the most important east-west highways in the northern part of the state, bisects Pleasantdale. In addition, a variety of buses and trains connect it to downtown Newark and New York. Commuting to New York by public transportation takes approximately one hour.

Thus, Pleasantdale, along with Teaneck and Fair Lawn, is convenient for Orthodox couples contemplating a move to New Jersey suburbia. The community has a roomy synagogue, a mikveh located directly across from the synagogue, two kosher butchers (which none of the Pleasantdale Orthodox patronize), and supermarkets stocking a variety of kosher and kosher-for-passover products. Four different day schools and yeshivahs provide busing for West Orange children, but there is neither a kosher bakery nor a kosher restaurant, an absence which is a source of constant complaint.

Pleasantdale was not always like this. Its initial claim to Jewish fame was as an alternative to the borscht belt, when it had several hotels and boarding houses which Jews from New York and Newark visited in search of fresh air and good food. Today, only one hotel remains, but it was purchased by Italians in the 1970s and its name was changed from Goldman's to The Town and Campus. As late as 1948 only 1,300 Jews lived in all of West Orange, of which Pleasantdale is a small part; ten years later the town's Jewish population was 7,000. Much of this growth consisted of refugees from Newark.

During these ten years, Newark's Jewish population declined from 57,000 to 41,000. Philip Roth's *Goodbye Columbus* described the process whereby those Jews

had struggled and prospered, and moved further and further west, towards the edge of Newark, then out of it, and up the slope of the Orange Mountains, until they had reached the crest and started down the other side, pouring into Gentile territory as the Scotch-Irish had poured through the Cumberland Gap.

Perhaps half of West Orange's growth in Jewish population after World War II was in the Pleasantdale area. The Jewish Center of West Orange, a Conservative congregation located in the town itself, experienced a dramatic increase in membership after 1945. It had fewer than forty families in 1933 when it acquired its first structure, and had only

forty-five families as late as 1945. But by 1950 it had one hundred and fifty families, and by 1958 there were six hundred on its membership rolls.

Stuart E. Rosenberg's autobiography contains a corrosive portrait of Pleasantdale Jewish life during World War II prior to its population explosion. He was then a student at the Jewish Theological Seminary and served as the community's weekend rabbi.⁴ Pleasantdale in the 1940s, Rosenberg writes, was "a foretaste of all that was — and would be — wrong with 'suburban Judaism' in America." For \$1,000 a year, Rosenberg was the *rov* of West Orange, conducting services on Friday night, Saturday morning and evening, and Sunday morning, and teaching the children on Wednesday afternoon and Sunday morning. He thoroughly detested his experience in Pleasantdale. His congregants, having moved to West Orange for its suburban life style, were ignorant of Jewish culture, theology, and history, and were mainly concerned with securing a modicum of *yiddishkeit* for their children. They led a vicarious Jewish existence, basking in the glow of their rabbi's religiosity.

Sabbath services were poorly attended, frequently lacking a minyan. Rosenberg attributes this not to lack of interest but, rather, to his congregants' embarrassment over their ignorance of Hebrew and ritual. He recounts the time when the president of the congregation was called to the *bimah* after the weekly portion had been read in order to place the crown on top of the Torah. Not knowing what to do with the crown, he became flustered and finally put it on his own head. "I knew then," Rosenberg notes, "that I could not spend the rest of my life in suburbia, teaching grown-ups materials that were really intended for children." Rosenberg believed that he was supervising a "super-kindergarten." Looking back forty years later, he continues to see a barren suburban Jewish landscape and asks whether Jews are ready to "finally settle down to a maturer and deeper Jewish life."

Until the 1960s there was no Orthodox presence in Pleasantdale. Then, as a result of a quarrel within the Jewish Center, dissident elements left it, merged with an Orthodox Newark synagogue seeking to relocate to the suburbs, and began conducting services in a building which previously had been an animal hospital. Soon the new congregation purchased a Baptist church (steeple and all) on Pleasant Valley Way, the area's major thoroughfare. In 1969, it had fewer than thirty *shomer shabbos* families. Today, it has approximately one hundred and fifty such families, some of whom are second-generation Holocaust survivors. As the Orthodox congregations of Newark folded, several merged with Ahawas Achim. A local joke is that the "Cong." in the synagogue name refers to "conglomerate" and not to "congregation." In addition to Ahawas Achim, Pleasant-

4. Stuart E. Rosenberg, "Suburban Judaism," *Midstream*, XXIX (November, 1983): 30-32. This is excerpted from Rosenberg's *The Real Jewish World: A Rabbi's Second Thoughts* (1984).

dale also has a small Young Israel group numbering about ten families. Pleasantdale thus has the two congregations that every Orthodox community requires: the one I attend and the one I wouldn't step foot into.

The most salient characteristics of Pleasantdale's Orthodox are their advanced education, their affluencè, and their large families. The average number of children is three, many have four, and one even has six. The classic sociological relationship between Orthodoxy and poverty is not true of Pleasantdale or of other suburban Orthodox communities. As a matter of fact, one of the religious problems facing Pleasantdale's Orthodox is carrying out the commandments of Purim and Passover to provide food for the poor. One does not find such Jews in the community and it is necessary to have the rabbi forward the money to the needy elsewhere.

Suburban affluence is a product of the professional status of Pleasantdale Orthodoxy, who include accountants, lawyers, computer programmers, engineers, and a large number of scientists working in New Jersey's chemical and pharmaceutical industries. As befits a congregation including many scientists, the handing out of honors on the Sabbath has been computerized. Very few of the Pleasantdale Orthodox are employed in business and the trades, which were the usual work for the first-generation Orthodox. Nor does the community have many teachers and academicians.

It is not surprising that many of Pleasantdale's Orthodox population are scientists since their fields pose less of a threat to traditional Judaism than do the humanities. One wonders whether religious fundamentalists gravitate to the sciences or whether science-oriented individuals find it easier to accept the intellectual demands of Orthodoxy. The scientific orientation of the Orthodox is responsible, in part, for the community's intellectual flaccidity, a characteristic which, according to the sociologist Charles Liebman, afflicts Yeshiva University also, the major American modern Orthodox institution and the alma mater of the congregation's rabbi and many of its members.

The social background and religious commitment of Pleasantdale's Orthodox determines the character of their children's higher education. Actually, "education" is a misnomer. There is very little desire for education, per se. Instead, education is viewed in its most pragmatic and instrumental sense. For the Orthodox, the university is a place where their children can be trained in a profession as expeditiously as possible. There is little recognition of the university years as a time for playing with ideas, for intellectual challenges, for ideological dialogue. In fact, education, in contrast to training, is suspect since it supposedly threatens religious pieties and leads to intermarriage. This anti-intellectualism is strengthened by the social background of many of Pleasantville's Orthodox which leads them to place an inordinate importance on financial success. Thus, many of Pleasantdale's young end up at Touro, Stern or

Yeshiva College, the triad of New York's Orthodox schools, where they can be safe from intellectual contamination and be trained as professionals.

The Orthodox of Pleasantdale are what sociologists have termed "modern Orthodox." The community also has a small number of sectarian Orthodox who are oriented toward the world of the yeshivah. No problem has troubled the community more than defining its own identity, of locating itself within the Orthodox spectrum, and of relating itself to the general Jewish population. Modern Orthodox Jews, Samuel C. Heilman has written,

stand between two sources of stigmatization: the contemporary, which considers their Orthodoxy a stigma, and the traditional Orthodox community which looks upon their modernity with disapproval. As such, modern Orthodox Jews have only themselves.⁵

Pleasantdale believes it is situated between the general mass of largely indifferent Jews who are on the road to assimilation and Orthodox right-wing sectarians who are an anachronism in modern suburbia.

The sectarian Orthodox are a constant reminder to Pleasantdale of the extent to which it falls short of being truly Orthodox. At stake is Pleasantdale's view of itself as a legitimate Orthodox community. On the other hand, there is a real communal fear of becoming "black hat," of moving too far to the right. Boro Park, Brooklyn, with its complete encapsulated Jewish life, is an anti-model for the modern Orthodox. Ahawas Achim even sponsored a Friday night Oneg Shabbat several years ago at which the topic of discussion was whether Pleasantdale was doomed to become another Boro Park.

Thus, the stance of the Pleasantdale Orthodox is ambivalence — defining themselves as Orthodox, guilty for not being more traditional, willingly participating in the delights of contemporary secular culture, and suspicious of their sectarian co-religionists. They fit the pattern described by Heilman as "cosmopolitan parochialism." Compartmentalization, whereby their lives are divided into Jewish and secular existences, is one way that Pleasantdale's Orthodox deal with the antithetical impulses of modernity and tradition. Another device is hypocrisy. Voltaire's aphorism that hypocrisy is the tribute which vice pays to virtue fits certain aspects of Pleasantdale's religious life. Thus, the constitution of Ahawas Achim states that the congregation must follow the Shulhan Arukh. The ruling, however, is not taken seriously since it would be too divisive and violate the community's religious consensus.

A few families have left Pleasantdale because it is insufficiently Orthodox. Most, nevertheless, know the community's character before moving in and have no difficulty reconciling the demands of Halakhah

5. Samuel C. Heilman, *Synagogue Life: A Study in Symbolic Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 266.

and modernity. They may fail to come to terms with what Heilman calls “the sociological ambivalence inherent in (their) dualistic identity,” yet they do not exhibit that “patterned desperation” which, he believes, characterizes modern Orthodoxy.

The fear that Pleasantdale might go “black hat” is unrealistic in light of the sociological and economic background of its residents. This is not to say that there have not been divisive religious issues, but these have been debated within a consensus which has moved to the right during the past decade as a result of the settling in Pleasantdale of a more rightwing, modern Orthodox element.

The divisiveness within Pleasantdale’s Orthodox is a microcosm of the divisiveness within the larger American Orthodox community and stems from the same source — religious one-upmanship. Status among the Orthodox is achieved in part by being more *frum* than one’s neighbor. This results in continual religious bickering which is viewed with incomprehension, if not ridicule, by the non-Orthodox. This need for religious status is particularly prevalent among newer and younger members of the community who are less affluent and influential than those who have lived in Pleasantdale longer.⁶ One achieves religious status by the size and nature of his *kippot*, by wearing a tallis over the head during the silent devotion, and by *shokling*. The religious consensus excludes the wearing of hats during services, although guests often wear them.

No specific religious issue has bedeviled Ahawas Achim more (and this is true of other modern Orthodox congregations) than the size and configuration of its *mehizah*. The controversy over it is a perfect opportunity for members to voice their religiosity without significantly changing their life style. Quarrels over the *mehizah* and other religious items are symbolic, resembling the interminable sectarian infighting between obscure left-wing sects which marked American radicalism during the 1930s, and can be quite intense because the stakes are so small.

The role of the rabbi at a modern Orthodox congregation such as Ahawas Achim is not an enviable one, since the laity are constantly on the alert for rabbinic religious transgressions which can be a source of status for themselves. (“I am even more religious than the rabbi.”) Denigration of the rabbi provides psychic pleasure to those seeking religious recognition, and the problem is accentuated when, as in the case of Ahawas Achim, the rabbi at one time filled a pulpit in a Conservative congregation. Furthermore, Ahawas Achim has many members who believe, rightly or not, that they are the rabbi’s superior in both knowledge of Torah and ritual observance.

Buffeted by the left and right and fearful of splitting the congregation, Ahawas Achim’s rabbi has adopted a tactic of compromise and movement by consensus, a tactic which also suits him temperamen-

6. For Orthodox divisiveness, see Heilman, *Synagogue Life*, ch. 1.

tally. This is most evident in his Sabbath sermons. A learned Talmudic discourse would go over the heads of many of his listeners and cause concern that he was going "black hat." He thus is forced to pitch his message to the lowest common denominator. The sermons focus on innocuous topics such as support for Israel, eliminating community gossip, and silence during prayer, and a constant theme is the need for greater unity among Jews and the danger of dissension. (Ahawas Achim means "brotherly love.") Throughout there is a reluctance to discuss theology, ideology, or halakhic observance because of the possibility of antagonizing some of the listeners. Ahawas Achim's rabbi perfectly fits Charles Liebman's description of the typical Yeshiva University graduate: "church-oriented, communally involved, and very much aware of the necessity for compromise."⁷ He presents no threat to the congregation's cultural dissonance.

Paralleling the rightward movement in American Judaism generally, Ahawas Achim has moved to the right but only after a consensus was reached. This has not satisfied everyone, particularly those whom the historian, Jeffrey Gurock, has described as the "card-carrying Orthodox." Some of the original families, uncomfortable with the shift to the right, have left the synagogue to join the West Orange Jewish Center. Obviously, the serious threat to congregational unity stems from the right wing, and any occasion has the potential to cause religious factionalism. Thus, when a dinner was held to honor the person responsible for building the new mikveh, a group insisted on separate seating for themselves and their wives even though the dinner's major speaker sat at a table with women. These same individuals also refused to eat meat at the dinner even though the caterer was glatt kosher and a member of the congregation. What better opportunity to exhibit one's religiosity than at a mikveh dinner?

The synagogue's annual dinner also was a source of divisiveness. A strict interpretation of halakhah forbids mixed dancing, yet, for years, Ahawas Achim's annual dinner had both social and traditional Jewish dancing. At one time the synagogue even had square dances. As the community moved to the right, the amount of social dancing at the annual dinner gradually decreased, and when the congregation decided to honor the rabbi, he asked that there be no such dancing, ostensibly in deference to his colleagues who would be in attendance. Since then there has been no mixed dancing. Modification in religious practice resulted from a religious consensus and a *fait accompli* rather than from an ideological confrontation. This is characteristic of modern Orthodoxy.

The building of Pleasantdale's *eruv* also revealed the religious

7. Charles S. Liebman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," in Morris Fine and Milton Himmelfarb, eds., *American Jewish Year Book, 1965* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1965), p. 60.

dynamics within the community. To construct an *eruv*, even under the best of circumstances, is a difficult undertaking. So many questions of religious law are involved and the danger of desecrating the Sabbath is so great that many rabbis prefer not to have one. West Orange's *eruv* was initiated only when the community got the approval of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, the most prominent contemporary authority on Jewish law, and was constructed under the supervision of one of his disciples from the Lakewood (New Jersey) yeshivah, a bastion of rightwing Orthodoxy. Even then, it took over four years and had to surmount the opposition of those who feared it would attract more "black hatters."

Women were particularly anxious to have the *eruv* completed since it would enable them to visit the synagogue on the Sabbath with their infant children. The *eruv* allows one to push a carriage with small children to the synagogue, even though many halakhic authorities have argued that children who are incontinent and under the age of education are a distraction and do not belong in synagogue. Men and women attending religious services together, however, conforms to the general pattern of American religious behavior, even though they do not sit together in an Orthodox sanctuary. The building of the *eruv* is, thus, an acknowledgment of the power of the secular culture to mold the behavior of the modern Orthodox.

Charles Liebman argued in 1965 that "the only remaining vestige of Jewish passion in America resides in the Orthodox community."⁸ While this is not completely true, as witness the enthusiasm in behalf of the annual United Jewish Appeal campaigns, Orthodoxy is currently the most dynamic force on the American Jewish religious scene. The future of Orthodoxy and American Judaism is being determined in suburbia. And it is in suburbia where the compromises and assumptions of modern Orthodoxy are most evident, where, to quote Liebman, Jews live in "a half-pagan, half-halakhic world."⁹

8. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

9. *ibid.*, p. 91.

Two Weeks In May: A Reform Rabbi's Odyssey

NORMAN MIRSKY

FREQUENTLY, ALL OF US IN OUR VARIOUS capacities and roles are invited to attend or participate in rounds of celebrations of the religious, academic or family life cycles. Occasionally, these events are so close to one another in time and setting and intent, yet are so essentially different, that they are worth being noted for what they teach us.

In the last two weeks of May, 1983, as academic, a family member, a rabbi and a friend, I participated in the following: the graduation of Hebrew Union College/Los Angeles' class of '83, the 80th birthday of the Rabbi of my youth in Toledo, Ohio, a Bar Mitzvah in Detroit's atheist synagogue, my in-laws' 50th wedding anniversary in a Cincinnati Orthodox shul, and, finally, a Bat Mitzvah in a Workman's Circle meeting hall in the Bronx. These *simhas* all took place over two weeks in May. In each event, my being a Rabbi gave me a unique vantage point, from which I can analyze as a sociologist and react as a Rabbi.

I. THE GRADUATION

Monday, May 16, 1983. Although my participation in the graduation of communal workers, educators and Rabbis-to-be was purely ceremonial, I have chosen to begin my journey here because of two speeches that informed the ceremony. The student who was selected by his peers to address the convocation on their behalf is a gay Jewish communal worker — a man extremely active in the highly controversial New Jewish Agenda. The speech was notable both for its lack of stridency and in its pleas for the restoration of compassion to its former place as the cornerstone of Jewish life. How is it, I wondered, that words that but ten years ago would have been truisms and cliches now were so welcome? How is it that a gay Jewish leftist is one of the few among us now pleading for prophetic justice, for prophetic compassion?

The featured speaker, the recipient of an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree, was Rabbi Harold Shulweiss — spiritual leader of an enormous Conservative congregation in suburban Encino — Encino, the setting for Moon Zappa's "Valley Girls."

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He spoke of Jewish life as a pendulum which must be allowed to swing from right to left — or from left to right. If it is stopped, it ceases to be in the process of becoming and turns into an idol. An idol is not a false god. It is an understatement of God's potential and totality — God's Oneness. To stop the pendulum, as do the New Orthodoxies on the Jewish right or Jewish left, is to make Jews into the worshippers of *avodah zarah* — gods made by their own hands. Shulweiss received a standing ovation. Ten members of his Conservative Encino shul gave a thousand dollars each toward a Rabbi Harold Shulweiss scholarship at Reform Hebrew Union College. It was *awesome*!

I left for Toledo, Detroit, Cincinnati, then New York. I would be reversing immigration — as it turned out I would witness the pendulum at a standstill in all but the Bronx. In Toledo, Detroit, Cincinnati, in Reform, Humanist and Orthodox synagogues, from *Shabbat* to *Shabbos*, I would participate in Jewish idolatry.

II. THE BIRTHDAY PARTY (Toledo, Ohio)

Friday, May 20, 1983. City of my birth, city where my former socialist, well-to-do immigrant grandparents and their first-born college graduate, divorcee, educational director in a Reform Temple, dead-of-cancer-at-the-age-of-42 daughter, my mother, lie buried in Woodlawn Cemetery. Woodlawn is a non-denominational, perpetual-care burial ground. There are no fences separating dead Jews from dead gentiles. There are no protruding crosses to assault mourning Jews. There is Hebrew script to distract a grieving gentile. Woodlawn holds more and more people whom I know quite well.

Toledo, though, is more than Woodlawn. In its suburb, Sylvania, a Sunday drive when I was a child, live many of my relatives and the parents of my friends. They live in a collection of condominiums called Stonehenge.

Across from Stonehenge is the former Collingwood Avenue Temple, moved from the swanky street of churches (now Black) ten miles into the woods and renamed *Congregation Shomer Emunim*. Actually, the Temple had been named Shomer Emunim since its founding well over 100 years ago. However, only since it has been in Sylvania, across from Stonehenge with a new senior Rabbi, has it been re-called by its Hebrew name.

I wandered into Shomer Emunim with my uncle. I wandered past seventy-five years of confirmation pictures in which bare-headed Toledo Jewish teenagers encircle bare-headed Rabbis. I wandered past a bin containing yarmulkes. In the old Collingwood Temple where I was the first Bar Mitzvah — on Friday night, January 6, 1950, and to which my father had *not* been invited because divorce had shamed our family — there were no yarmulkes. At my mother's funeral, held in the same sanctuary

on Sunday, March 7, 1954, there were no yarmulkes. At our wedding in its chapel on June 1, 1958, though my semi-Orthodox in-laws might have been eased into my life had they been permitted, there were no yarmulkes. There was no glass broken. What was there? There was a Rabbi whose voice thundered in favor of a Jewish state and against Joe McCarthy, a Rabbi who, rigid and distant as he was, seemed to combine a strong commitment to Jewish survival with political liberalism, prophetic social justice and intellectual excellence. We learned to pray bare-headed, to tolerate cold ceremonies, to ignore gentile choirs and trumpets instead of *shoferot* because this Rabbi, this ageless, thundering conscience, made us feel Jewish and educated and one-up on both the ruthless gentiles who ran the city and the benighted shul-goers who only heard the prophets chanted but never knew what they had to say about hunger and poverty and oppression and a God served through humility.

“Norman, is that you!” I heard the voice, but there was no ageless giant, who wore, we assumed, a tie to bed. There was a lop-sided old man in a turtle neck. “Why are you here, Norman? Can we have lunch?” “I’m here for your birthday, Rabbi, I’ll be here tonight.”

Shomer Emunim was filled that night. I had never been at a service there. A nameless assistant rabbi, a boy, read from a huge blue book. On a table sat the silver chalice kiddush cup that my grandparents had contributed in honor of their first grandson’s Bar Mitzvah.

The service ended. The new Senior Rabbi had announced that after the service, *our* Rabbi, who was too weak to stand, would be interviewed by him. He would tell us what we had always wanted to know (what did it feel like when you named us? married us? buried us?). I sat next to my aunt and uncle. In the row before ours were four widows who had been wives when I had last seen them.

The interview began. Question after question about the Rabbi’s year away from Collingwood in 1943 — when he was in Washington working for Abba Hillel Silver, organizing what was to become the Israel lobby — assuming higher and higher offices in the Zionist Organization of America. With each answer the voice got stronger, more articulate, the thunder was back, “And let me tell you that Menachem Begin is the only Prime Minister who has brought *peace* to Israel!”

Then the greetings: a letter from President Reagan — unread; from Senators Metzenbaum and Glenn — unread; from the other synagogues and Rabbis — unread. One *was* read: HAPPY BIRTHDAY — love, Menachem Begin.

My aunt and uncle and I headed back into Stonehenge. “He mentioned you and your mother,” said my aunt, “very nice, but I feel a little empty.” “He married us 47 years ago. All he talked about was Menachem Begin, how wonderful he is.” I said, “This Menachem Begin who has contempt for liberal Jews, who would consider even Shomer Emunim, let alone Collingwood, worse than a Mosque.” “And the new Rabbi we don’t

care, of course, because we don't go to services that much anymore," says my aunt, "but some people complain that all he speaks about is Israel, how you shouldn't criticize it. They complain that he has nothing to say about Toledo — its unemployment, its racial problems. But he goes to B'Nai Israel (Conservative) on the second day of Rosh Hashanah." "By the way," my aunt says, "there is one decent Rabbi in this city — Orthodox, six kids, very short, sweet, means what he says." "We've never been to his shul — we couldn't sit together. But it's doing quite well. B'Nai Israel is nearly broke." "Shomer Emunim is paid for," says my uncle, "excellent management by the president, Art S." My aunt, who is the most religious person I know, says, "I've never been very religious; I know there is a God, and I try to be good, but I don't know much about Israel. The last time that I got anything out of a service is when Rabbi Lichtenstein used to tell us stories when we were kids at the old B'Nai Israel."

III. *THE BAR MIZVAH* (Farmington Hills, Michigan)

Saturday, May 21, 1983. Suburban Detroit — The Birmingham Temple.

The Bar Mizvah is the son of my friend of longest duration. Her marriage to an architect ended in divorce four years ago. They have three sons. Three years ago she remarried.

Since then, the architect has remarried the former wife of a psychiatrist, and has moved in with her two sons. Both new families belong to the Birmingham Temple. A phone call to my friend had made me aware that there had been a conflict between her and her former husband because he wanted their son to share his Bar Mizvah with his stepson (the boys are friends), while the mother wanted him to have a Bar Mizvah of his own. The decision as to which parent to please was resolved, amidst tears, in favor of the mother.

The Bar Mizvah ceremony was a Saturday night function. We had checked into a Holiday Inn not far from the Temple, where the marquee outside the Inn wished Mazel Tov to Alison, the guest of honor of the morning's Bat Mizvah reception, while the billboard inside welcomed our Bar Mizvah, along with the Knights of Lithuania, and two dog owners' societies: The Friends of Scottish Terriers and The Friends of Irish Terriers.

We had little time to refresh ourselves and pay a fast visit to my friend's home, for we had been instructed, upon our arrival, to be at the Temple by 5:00 PM for photographs. I had yet to prepare my talk to the Bar Mizvah. I spoke to him in his room, which was filled with trophies that he had won as a hockey player. I also read his talk which, at the Birmingham Temple, takes the place of the Torah and the Prophets. The talk, well researched and well written, was about Pinchas Zuckerman who, like the State of Israel, was born in 1948 and, who like the Bar

Mizvah, is a violinist. I quickly pencilled my charge to the boy. Both hockey and violin playing, if done well, translate friction into grace: that was my wish for the boy — that he continue in his sweetness to turn friction into play and into music.

Rabbi Sherwin Wine, founder of the Birmingham Temple, a gifted, brilliant man but a 19th century rationalist to his core, showed up for pictures along with the rest of us. We have known each other for a long time, and we both know the families very well. He greeted me by asking me if Hebrew Union College was getting even more Traditionalist and then added snidely, “Are they still teaching the prophets as though social justice comes from God?” To him, the prophets are right-wing Fundamentalists. Justice and Mercy are human creations, he claims.

Photographs were taken. Old and new families under the proper direction and at the proper distance fit easily into a wide angle lens. Rabbi Wine called the Bar Mizvah by his Hebrew name and spoke of his ability to work hard, to stand straight, always to smile. I called the boy by his American name, and spoke of friction and of love. I ended my talk by asking the congregation to share my wishes for the boy by joining in saying *Amen*. They did!

We, the blended families and the rabbis, stood in a receiving line. The well wishers said to me — your words were very touching. They said to Rabbi Wine — your service with no God, no Scroll, no Prophets — your service was very realistic.

Later that evening, my friend told me how much my talk meant to her. The psychiatrist ex-husband of the Bar Mizvah’s step-mother, with a Catholic woman on his arm, told me how much the Temple appealed to him because of its realism. I asked him whether or not in his line of work reality did not take conflict into the account. “Hmm,” he said. “I’ll give that some thought.” Someone else congratulated me for bringing religion into the Temple. “You got us to say Amen. First time, felt good.” The boy confirmed into humanist adulthood and mizvot seemed no less a Bar Mizvah to me. Neither did he appear less of one to his grandparents and to his aunts and his uncles. But God and the prophets were not welcome in that place, and the crowd spoke of *reality*.

IV. 50th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY (Cincinnati, Ohio)

I arrived in Cincinnati a day before my wife, daughter and son did, so I stayed with our friends. He is an Italian-American from Cleveland and Professor and Chairman of the Department of English at Xavier, a Jesuit-sponsored university. She is from Argentina and, like my wife, a teacher of the children of immigrants. They seldom go to church. Though religion seems to intrigue them, it makes them ill-at-ease.

My in-laws, whose 50th wedding anniversary we were about to celebrate, have suffered many tragedies. One of the most recent and

more annoying of these (to our mind, at least) is the conversion of their grandson, David, our nephew and cousin, to extreme Orthodoxy. He attends the Tels Yeshiva in Cleveland, a place which forbids secular learning, and which not only divides the world between Jews and Gentiles, but refines that ancient distinction so that it now delineates between Jews like them and the rest of us *homo sapiens*. My in-laws once were semi-Orthodox, but now gradually are becoming re-involved with Orthodoxy, and find this grandson both vexing and guilt-inducing. Nevertheless, his religion is theirs, only more so. He dresses in black. He wears a fedora. He never smiles and his chief source of gratification seems to derive from condemning other Orthodox Jews for their deviation, their backsliding, their meanderings from Halakhah. He takes particular pleasure when the slippage involves women.

On *Erev Shabbos*, seven of us gathered in my in-laws' tiny house to have dinner and await the arrival from the East of my wife's sister, David's mother, and his older brother. They had already incurred his wrath because they were expected after sundown on the Sabbath. He paced up and down amongst the few rooms, frequently inspecting utensils, occasionally advising my mother-in-law of impending sins. If it were not *Shabbos*, he looked as though he would hand out citations for *mizvah* violations.

During the previous twenty-four hours, my mother-in-law, my wife and my daughter had spent the entire day in the synagogue preparing vats of tuna fish and egg salad for the anniversary kiddush under the knowing eye of an unconverted widow whom the shul employs as a combination overseer and *shabbos goy*. My Los Angeles women were in no mood for David's piety. He then decreed that we could not use a *Challah* for our *Shabbos* meal. He needed two for his *mozi* and was unwilling to eat with us.

For the first time in recent memory my family had no *Challah* for our Shabbat. David had two. Halakhah had been served.

The next morning, the anniversary was celebrated in the Shul. The women sat behind a high curtained *mehizah*. My father-in-law got to assign *aliyot*. He chanted *Maftir* and the *Haftorah*. The rabbi stood on the *bimah* above the Torah-reading desk and explained the text. His yarmulke was cocked over one eye. He hooked his thumbs into belt loops. His voice was deep. My son said, "This is a macho place." David stood during the entire service. He did not wear a *talit*. He wore his fedora. Only married men wear a *talit*, in his edition of Judaism. Only goyim wear yarmulkes in Shul. Our non-Jewish friends arrived. They were unsure of themselves in this new environment. They were of Italian descent. They looked Jewish. The woman was carrying flowers to honor our occasion. An usher snapped a yarmulke onto the heads of my friend and his son. He threw a *talit* over each of their backs as though he were getting them ready for saddles. With a reprimand, the woman had the flowers

removed from her hands. She was shoved through one door, the males through another. Welcome to the Jewish religion! Near the end of the service the Rabbi spoke of my in-laws and their tragic life of Torah service. He asked my mother-in-law and my father-in-law to stand. They did — she behind the *mehizah* and he in the midst of the males. Happy 50th wedding anniversary! David was angry — the shul is like a church; there was English; the women were not in the balcony. That night he tried to make his brother vacate the bedroom and sleep in the living room because he needed privacy to *daven*. My in-laws granted his wish. His brother, transcendental meditator, grinned and stood his ground. David headed for a bus back to Tels, but not before he posed for a family portrait. I was the photographer — not in the picture. David smiled. A Reform Rabbi is good for something.

V. BAT MIZVAH (The Bronx, N.Y.)

Monday, May 30, 1983. In 1965, when I was a graduate student and interim Hillel Director at Brandeis University, an undergraduate, in a state of anguish, approached me with his problem. He had been the Jewish virtuoso in his family. The youngest of seven children and the only one to go to college, he had spent his youth as a Cantor's assistant and a camper and counselor at Conservative Camp Ramah. His family expected him to become a Rabbi. At Brandeis he was drawn to Jewish secularism, labor Zionism and Jewish workers' movements. He was also drawn to a Brandeis co-ed on a scholarship who came from the rural outskirts of Savannah, Georgia. She was a Christian from a fundamentalist bible-thumping denomination. Her father worked in a factory and wrote poetry. His daughter, like the young man, had been raised with a strong social conscience, which was given intellectual and emotional support at Brandeis University in the 1960s. The problem was how to tell his family that he was going to marry a convert to Judaism, which the young woman was willing to become. With four years at Brandeis as the roommate of a Rabbi's daughter, her entrance into Judaism was strictly pro-forma. The result of our conversation was that the young man phoned his parents. They wished him Mazel Tov, within the year she converted and they married. Both the conversion and wedding were Reform. I was their Rabbi. Monday, May 30, Memorial Day, 1983, was the Bat Mizvah day of their oldest daughter, Rachel. She and her sister Shira attend a religious school in a Conservative synagogue, to which the family belongs. The secularist, labor Zionist leanings of the parents, plus the desire to create their own liturgy for the event, lead them to search for a place outside of the synagogue in which to celebrate the occasion. The locale which was amenable to their religious-secularist ideas for such a function was a Workman's Circle Center in the Bronx. The hall was rather bleak and my friend suffered some anticipatory remorse at not having a "normal" Bat Mizvah in a

synagogue, but, on the morning of the simḥah, remorse became rejoicing. With family and friends from all over North America present, the service began with Cat Stevens' song, "Morning Has Broken" —

Morning has broken like the first morning

Blackbird has spoken like the first bird

Praise for the singing, praise for the morning —

which was followed by *Mah Tovv*. The liturgy for the Bat Mitzvah was an amalgam of traditional Siddur, Bialik, Lewis Carroll and Abraham Joshua Heschel saying, "Every child is a royal heir." Then came the Torah service. Rachel chanted from the Book of Numbers about the good optimistic spies and the bad pessimistic spies. Then she chanted from, and we read from, the Messianic prophet Zechariah: *Rani v'simḥi bat Zion ki hin-neni ba, ve-shakhanti b'tokhekh ne-um Adonai*. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for lo I come and I will dwell in thy midst, saith the Lord."

Then we read something that Rachel's parents had written: "As we grow older we recognize that the death of loved ones is very much a part of our lives . . . We miss the presence of Rachel's granddaddy and her bubby in our celebration today. Those two people were very different; yet, they shared a sense of justice and loyalty to family and community . . ."

There was singing and there was dancing.

There was lots of food.

Though everyone loved the service and celebrated and stuffed themselves and congratulated the parents, my friend was moved the most by what Rachel's Baptist grandma had to say. She said, "This was a real spiritual thing." Of course she was right, but we needed to hear her say it. Because we knew that as Jews we simply had no way of telling any more whether something was spiritual or not.

VI. CONCLUSION

It may be an indictment of the contemporary Jewish religious scene to look to gentile members of our family for spiritual validation. Yet, in his warning us not to be blinded from Judaism by our own idolatrous needs, Harold Shulweiss was no less critical.

Spiritual is the Trojan-horse word of the moment. All varieties of beliefs and behaviors, from hyper-rational Jewish humanism to psychomysticism, to cult-like yeshivah Orthodoxy to macho-revisionist Zionism or bizarre combinations of these or other manifestations of Judaism, trot into our lives as "spiritual" gifts. One wishes to banish the word from our vocabularies. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake not to recognize in the over-use of the word spiritual a searching for *something* that is missing in Jewish life.

On my journey I sensed that I was confronting more than Jewish religious pluralism, wondrous as that is to see. I sensed that I was also

religious pluralism, wondrous as that is to see. I sensed that I was also encountering Jews frustrated and defensive in their religious strivings. I am not saying that Primitive Baptist (her denomination) grandmothers of Bat Mizvah girls hold the key to our salvation. I am saying that a little more ingenuousness, a little less machismo may help us get out from behind the pendulum — swinging or fixed — and open us to times and rhythms as yet unexperienced; or, if we feel more comfortable with this formulation — to experience for ourselves what our Jewish forebears sensed as religious.

In the meantime, we must candidly acknowledge that we have lost *the* way. Perhaps this is the best thing that could have happened to us.

Babi Yar

(for Anatoly Kuznetsov)

C A R O L E G L A S S E R

They say the woman with the black hair
shivered as she turned
that the soldier called out to her in German
told her to wait, while the others lined up in front of the ditch,
took off their clothes.
Body after body was shot then, one on top of the other into the ditch.
That by the time it took him to walk to the woman
(a matter of minutes)
her hair had turned completely white
and when she was finally shot
the bullets only wounded her
and she was buried like that, still breathing, an old lady not quite twenty.

This happened thirty-nine years ago
and every woman that knows about her
has gone to sleep, one time or another
hugging her shadow.

Because what substance do we have?
And if we are not this woman, or her mother, or her daughter,
then, who are we? Who are we?

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The “Greening” of Jewish Education

JULIUS WEINBERG

NOT UNTIL THE DECADE OF THE 1970S did those who speak for the Jewish community in the United States declare — publicly and definitively — that their educational institutions, the instrument through which American Jewry seeks to assure itself of generational and cultural continuity, no longer served this purpose effectively or even adequately. No such sense of crisis about Jewish education had emerged from the organized Jewish community in many decades, perhaps not since the communal survey that brought the work of Samson Benderly to the fore in New York City at the opening of the twentieth century, and for two reasons: either such dire assessments did not appear to be warranted or conditions in the Jewish community were not ripe for the crystallization of such pessimistic views concerning this vital segment of community activity.

From the 1880s to the First World War, each of the two principal elements of American Jewry — the highly acculturated second and third-generation, central-European minority, and the multitude of first-generation immigrants from the Russo-Polish Pale — did little, apart from establishing some rabbinical schools and several progressive Hebrew programs, to create a network of institutions to advance learning and literacy on the grassroots level. In the case of the German-Jews, with their sponsorship of the one-day-a-week Sunday School, this stemmed largely from their assimilationist posture, their disdain for the Hebrew language and for what they considered to be old-world rituals associated with an outdated ghettoized way of life. In the case of the Eastern-European Jews, the majority of them were too preoccupied with the problems of elemental survival in a strange, and occasionally hostile, environment, to pay much attention to creating formal educational institutions for the perpetuation of their inherited cultural and religious regimen.

In the inter-war era, neither objective conditions nor the subjective assessments of the Jewish educational scene by community leadership — whatever the shortcomings of the educational effort of the '20s and '30s — could be labelled as outright despair. It is now evident that in the ghettos of the large urban centers, and in many small towns to which Jews had migrated, a substantial legacy of religio-cultural tradition came to be transmitted to the second-generation offspring of the immigrants and was reinforced by the boundaries and ties of a singularly American-

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Jewish ghetto. In many instances — in New York City, in Cleveland, Detroit, Minneapolis and Chicago — this legacy was institutionalized by the ideological commitments and pedagogic skills of a generation of educators who were able, for the moment, through the communal Talmud Torah, the four- or five-day-a-week afternoon school, to fuse the cultural nationalism of Ahad Ha'am and the progressive education of John Dewey into an amalgam that served the needs of the wider Americanization sought by this generation of educators and parents, along with the particularism of their Jewish commitments and culture. While many youngsters still attended the one-day-a-week Sunday School, the Talmud Torah and the after-school Yeshivah, where instruction of 10 to 12 hours per week effectively reinforced the learning absorbed from home and neighborhood — plus a tiny day-school movement — provided a base of Jewish literacy and commitment to enable this generation, largely Eastern-European and some second, to fulfill, with a measure of resolve and generosity, the many responsibilities that flowed from the events produced by and following World War II.¹

* * *

The years from 1945 to the mid-Sixties, years of growing homogeneity and upward mobility for American Jewry, provide both a variegated and deceptively contradictory portrait of Jewish educational endeavor. On the positive side, shiny, new suburban structures that housed a proliferating number of congregational schools, elegantly produced "Dick-and-Jane" texts, seemingly happy youngsters, Americanized teachers and professionalized administrators lent credence to the notion that Jewish education had at last come to maturity, becoming not only an effective, but, in contrast to the now legendary — and infamous — *rebbe* and *heder* of yesteryear, a downright pleasurable experience. It appeared, on the face of it, that American Jews, in contrast to the lack of success encountered by other minority groups seeking to perpetuate their old-world heritage in the new, had been able to fashion an effective instrument to reinforce and perpetuate the middle-class Judaism so fashionable, and seemingly so impregnable, in the decades that followed the end of World War II. These developments were reinforced by other positive trends: the rapidly increasing number of day-schools established

1. The institutionalization of the Talmud-Torah system for New York City is treated in Arthur A. Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community* (New York, 1970). Similar developments in other communities are treated in the following: Louis Swichkow and Lloyd P. Gartner, *The History of the Jews of Milwaukee* (Philadelphia, 1963); Gunther Plaut, *The Jews in Minnesota; the First Seventy-Five Years* (New York, 1959); and Max Vorspan and Lloyd P. Gartner, *History of the Jews of Los Angeles* (San Marino, California, 1970). A masterful analysis of the fusion created by these educators between Hebraism and Zionism, on one hand, and progressive education, on the other, will be found in Walter I. Ackerman, "The Americanization of Jewish Education," *JUDAISM* (Fall, 1975): 416-35.

by the resurgent Orthodox sector of the community and the alterations in ideology and curriculum taking place in Reform quarters, the erosion of the universalism that characterized "classical" Reform doctrine and the increasing emphasis on tradition and on the centrality of Zion in their school program. These developments, along with the burgeoning of "the vital center" — the afternoon schools and the Ramah camps of the Conservative movement — served as assurance that the fulfillment of the nineteenth-century dream might yet come to pass — that here, in the United States, the Jew need not give up the greater challenges and rewards of American society while retaining the pleasures and the security of his Jewish identity.

Convinced, as one Jewish educator/theologian noted, that "Jewish education was on the threshold of a new and more exalted status,"² too little attention was paid to ominous signs that should have tempered the euphoria that marked the assessments and prognostications of the '50s. These were: the passing from the educational scene of the men and women — Samson Benderly, Leo Honor and others — who provided the vision, the ideology and the administrative skills that lay at the heart of the four- and five-day-a-week Talmud Torah and many congregational schools of the inter-war era, and the teachers, largely Eastern-European born and trained, who transmitted this message in the classroom; the decline, and, in many instances, the ultimate demise, of the secular schools — Labor Zionist and Yiddishist — and the after-school Yeshivot; beyond the classroom, the erosion of the second-area-of-settlement in the nation's urban centers and the replacement of these singularly Jewish ghettos by the "gilded," yet Jewishly anemic, ghettos of suburbia; and the lowly status of Jewish education on the agenda of the organized Jewish community. Community leadership continued a policy of "benign neglect" towards Jewish education, a stance that grew out of the conviction that community funding should be concentrated on programs unrelated to culture or education — on community relations, exorcising God from the public schools or pursuing a vanishing breed of anti-Semites, and on recreational, social or medical services.

* * *

Initial doubts concerning the efficacy of the congregational schooling that, by the 1950s, had generally replaced the outmoded community-sponsored Talmud Torah came to light in a massive *Report* on Jewish education in the United States that was sponsored by the American Association for Jewish Education. Few paid attention to the warning signals contained in the 1959 document: that, while school enrollments had increased, this was, in part, sheer demographics; that mastery of the

2. Eugene B. Borowitz, "Problems Facing Jewish Educational Philosophy in the Sixties," *American Jewish Year Book* (New York and Philadelphia, 1961), pp. 145-53.

Hebrew language or biblical narratives in the congregational school was virtually non-existent; that hours of instruction and years of enrollment were dropping; that, despite all efforts to professionalize the role of the teacher, teaching remained, even in the week-day school, a part-time, underpaid occupation; that, in Sunday Schools, standards were low enough to conclude that what existed was largely a case of "the ignorant teaching the ignorant"; and that three-quarters of federation leadership opposed day-school education and that federation support for Jewish education continued to be minimal. The overall assessment, to be repeated *ad nauseam* in the years to come, was loud and clear — and unheard: Jewish education in the United States "is like a shallow river, 'a mile wide and an inch deep.'"³

One decade later there came confirmation of the pessimistic elements of the 1959 AAJE *Report* in a document drawn up by the institutional and intellectual leadership of American Jewry seeking to chart the "probable trends and developments" that their constituency would confront in the 1970s. The Task Force came down rather harshly on the state of Jewish education, albeit it tended to be rather sanguine regarding other equally ominous developments — intermarriage, to cite one — in the Jewish community. Specifically, the *Report* concluded that graduates of most Jewish schools were both illiterate in Jewish matters and lacking in positive Jewish identification; that Jewish schooling tended to be a negative experience; that there were few schools that could serve as models of exemplary Jewish education; that Jewish educators and teachers enjoyed little status or authority within their respective communities; and that, under present circumstances, it was "difficult" and of "dubious morality" to recruit men and women into the profession. Having put forth these denigrative assessments, the Task Force proceeded to offer a series of policy pieties that would neither offend any single segment of its broadly-based constituency nor offer any substantive solutions to the problems that it had uncovered.⁴

Later in the '70s came more of the same — from the director of the Jewish Communal Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee, who, as a consequence of a massive set of documents and studies, concluded that "there is general agreement . . . that Jewish education has failed to achieve its goals" and, from an unexpected quarter, from federation leaders who, for budgetary, ideological, and institutional reasons, were pained and embarrassed by the shortcomings of one of the community's most visible, and dysfunctional, agencies. In Cleveland, the Federation, often looked to as a model for the country as a whole,

3. Alexander Dushkin and Uriah Z. Engleman, *Jewish Education in the United States* (New York: American Association for Jewish Education, 1959).

4. David Sidorsky, *The Future of the Jewish Community in America: A Task Force Report* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1972), pp. 39-50.

launched a blue-ribbon study of Jewish education in that community which subsequently led to changes of personnel and program.⁵ In Boston, a city noted for the high quality of its Jewish educational institutions over the past half-century, the executive head of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies concluded, in a public address, that

Jewish education today is a disaster. (He went on to tell his audience that) the quality is poor. The administration is weak. Its funding is inadequate. It lacks scope and perspective. It is divided by ideological differences. The atmosphere from which students come to learn is hopeless. The conditions under which they study are futile.

One administrator — head of the midwestern bureau of Jewish education — responded by suggesting that lowering one's sights might relieve the pain, that "unrealistic expectations for Jewish education in 20th century America is one reason for Jewish education's bad name."⁶

* * *

This decade-long denigration of Jewish education, in sharp contrast to the sanguine, even enthusiastic, attitude of communal leaders towards other facets of American-Jewish life, requires some explanation. While a perceptible decline in the quality of Jewish education may, in part, account for the pejorative assessments of these schools in the '70s, the sources of disappointment — even the fury — with Jewish education by communal spokesmen must be sought elsewhere and, largely, in the breakdown of the consensus-culture of the '50s, the emergence on the American and Jewish scene of the New Left, the youth and the counter-culture movements of the late '60s, specifically the threat to the stability — and to the future — of the Jewish community that these developments represented.

The political radicalism and social deviancy that emerged in the late '60s and '70s, the over-representation of Jews at Haight-Ashbury and Esalen, the highly visible — and audible — leadership provided by Jewish youth for the New Left and campus protest, the gathering of funds by Jewish college students for Yassir Arafat's El Fatah, the search by college dropouts for Jesus at home or Hari Krishna abroad, and, ultimately, the penetration — and, in a sense, the legitimation — of many elements of the

5. Yehuda Rosenman, director, Jewish Communal Affairs Department, "Jewish Education and Jewish Identity," paper presented at the Plenary Session of the American Jewish Committee, 71st Annual Meeting, May 1977, at Miami, Florida. The studies sponsored by the American Jewish Committee on Jewish education, which presumably served as the basis for this address, were published in several volumes: *Jewish Education and Jewish Identity: Colloquium Papers* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1976 and 1977) and the *Report of the Jewish Education Study Committee of the Jewish Community of Cleveland*, published by the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, February 26, 1976.

6. Bernard Olshansky, "Jewish Education in a Time of Change," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* (June, 1979): 323-28; and Alan D. Bennett, "Jewish Education in a Time of Change: Response and Reaction," *Ibid.*, (Winter, 1979-80): 146-148.

adversarial culture into what had heretofore been a predominantly middle-class culture, marked the denouement of the Jewish encounter with the American experience — our Weimar, as it were. The rise of the adversarial culture and its proliferation, the rise of the single-parent family or the absence of any family ties, demographic decline and quantum leaps in intermarriage rates, and the weakening of the synagogue, brought the recognition, by the decade's end, that these developments were not of the moment or of the decade, but, rather, the price to be paid by a minority seeking to obtain all of the rewards of a free society. Confronted by this socio-cultural debacle, Jewish leadership, unfortunately, avoided a major, albeit painful, reassessment of its priorities and values, and turned, instead, to the community's educational institutions for solace and support — and found little of either. The anger directed towards Jewish educators and the inferior schooling that they provided, crested precisely when it became clear that these educators could neither turn the clock back to the '50s nor could Jewish education — soon to drench itself in the very adversarial culture that they were being asked to exorcise — offer much hope for the '80s.

The "greening" of Jewish education, the abandonment of the norms, structure and philosophy of the '50s, along with the quintessential emphasis on formal dress codes, registration-forms and attendance records, homework and student workbooks, teachers' aids and parent-teacher conferences, a fixed curriculum and graduation requirements, came with unexpected swiftness and pervasiveness; the impact of the educational philosophy of the adversary-culture that bloomed in the late '60s left its greatest imprint on the Sunday School, to a lesser degree on the week-day afternoon school, and had its most minimal impact, as one would expect, on the right-wing of the day-school movement. The acceptance of the counter-culture's educational philosophy, pedagogic techniques, and curricular designs — more specifically, the anti-middle class bias that inhered in the writings of Ivan Illich, A.S. Neil, John Holt and Jonathan Kozol that played so critical a role in revolutionizing the norms and character of the American public school in the '70s — penetrated Jewish education at many levels.⁷

As early as 1967, the American Association for Jewish Education gave support to the "new education" through the National Curriculum Research Institute, affirming that Jewish education could be improved by strong doses of presentism, social studies, and relativism. Reminiscent of the Reform Jews' movement of the Gilded Age, the Institute jumped on the social-justice bandwagon and intoned that "the Jewish community is deeply committed to ethical conduct . . ."⁸

7. The emergence and impact of the adversary-culture is treated in many monographs. A thoughtful introduction is by William L. O'Neill, *Coming Apart* (Chicago, 1961); educational issues are contained in Cornelius J. Troost, ed., *Radical School Reforms* (Boston, 1973).

Reinforcement for the new education — the wholesale introduction of mini-courses, open curricula and open classrooms, individualized learning, simulation and role-playing, flexible schedule, values-clarification and other “strategies” of experiential learning — came from many quarters and was justified in many ways. One educator made the discovery that there exists a “divergence between the program of the Jewish school and the real world” and proposed that this tension be resolved by a “fundamental revision in the character of the Jewish school;” another promoted “learning which is exhilarating,” hiring “teachers who care,” and providing for “greater student involvement” in the school curriculum. Legitimation for the enthronement of the child as the source of classroom authority came from a Talmudic dictum cited by the editor of the American Association for Jewish Education’s *Pedagogic Reporter* (now called the Jewish Educational Service of North America), “Much Torah have I learned from my teachers, more from my colleagues and most of all from my pupils.”⁹

Other organizations — regional, sub-sectarian, and national — joined the AAJE and its educators in promoting the transformation of the school. One such institution, the short-lived Institute for Jewish Life, established by the Council of Jewish Welfare Funds and Federations in 1969, in part as a response to marching and chanting Jewish youth demanding that the welfare funds and federations do something more for Jewish education and, in part, by the Council’s sense that something had to be done to aid an obviously troubled segment of Jewish communal endeavor, funded a variety of “innovative” projects for the express purpose of “deformalizing” the Jewish school.¹⁰ The “greening” of Jewish education received strong support from the West: from Colorado came Audrey Friedman’s *Alternatives in Religious Education*, a quarterly that offered itself as a guide to “exciting student-centered curricular activities, programs, units and mini-courses,” and her Rocky Mountain Planning

8. Judah Pilch, “The National Curriculum Institute,” *Jewish Education* (Fall, 1967): 152-161.

9. A charitable assessment of the impact of the new education on Jewish schools is by Walter I. Ackerman, “The Present Moment in Jewish Education,” *Midstream* (December, 1972): 3-24. Samplings of the rhetoric through which Jewish educators embraced the new education can be found in: “Values Clarification and Innovative Education,” *Compass*; *Directions in Jewish Education*, Union of American Hebrew Congregations for the Commission on Jewish Education (January-February, 1971); “Six Exciting Happenings in Jewish Education,” *Compass*; *New Directions in Jewish Education* (Spring, 1978), Union of American Hebrew Congregations — Central Conference of American Rabbis Commission on Jewish Education, New York, New York; Efraim Warshaw, “Jewish High School Student Attitudes Toward Education,” *Jewish Education* (Fall, 1972): 25-32; Mordecai H. Lewittes, “Introduction” to the *7th Annual Roundup of New Programs in Jewish Education* (Spring, 1979) (New York: American Association for Jewish Education).

10. A summary account of the projects funded by the Institute for Jewish Life will be found in *Venture in Creativity: Report on the Institute for Jewish Life* (New York: Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, 1977).

Workshops, both designed to create "schools of salvation."¹¹ Soon the religious segment of the organized Jewish community jumped on the bandwagon of school reform. Stung by publicity given to white-collar criminality, spokesmen for one segment of the Orthodox community instituted a program for instilling a strong sense of ethics in their student body. On the West Coast, the Hebrew Union College developed a program of "confluent education," a combination of sensitivity training and values-clarification derived from the group-encounter experiences at Esalen and from the writings of Dr. George I. Brown,¹² and, in the East, the Melton program at the Jewish Theological Seminary paralleled this with a program of values-clarification and pedagogic innovation of a more traditional and cognitive character. These institutional efforts to promote the affective and experiential directions of the new education were buttressed by a host of individual entrepreneurs peddling volumes on *Feeling Judaism: Interpersonal Exploration in Values, Clarifying Jewish Values*, and *Jewish Consciousness Raising*.¹³

By the 1970s, promoting and responding to a felt need, the American Association for Jewish Education began publishing an annual *Roundup of New Programs* for educators seeking easy access to "creative" education — "imaginative" methods, "modified" curricula, and "novel" materials. Further: in the mid-'70s, under the rubric "To Everything There is a Time," the AAJE convened a two-day conference for the purpose of "opening up our schools and individualizing instruction and all that these terms imply." The receptivity of the AAJE towards the new education was reflected in the assertion by the conference chairman that his organization has "no *a priori*, preconceived notions about the kind of instructional models that were [a] key to quality Jewish education."¹⁴

11. The material published by Alternatives in Jewish Education, Inc., under the direction of Audrey Friedman Marcus and others, is voluminous and ranges from a mini-collection of innovative projects and pedagogies published tri-annually in the 1970s — *Alternatives in Religious Education* — to the more substantive publications on Jewish holidays, customs, and ceremonies of the Rocky Mountain Curriculum Planning Workshop, available from ARE Publications in Denver, Colorado. See, too, Audrey Friedman, "Six Exciting Happenings in Jewish Ed[ucation]," *Compass Magazine* (New York: UAH/CCAR, 1978).

12. See William Cutler and Jack Dauber, "Confluent Education in the Jewish Setting" (Los Angeles: Rhea Hirsch School of Education, HUC/JIR, 1972); and the materials published by the *Melton Research Center Newsletter* (New York: The Melton Research Center for Education/The Jewish Theological Seminary of America).

13. Dov Peretz Elkins, *Clarifying Jewish Values; a Handbook of Value Clarification; Strategies for Group Leaders, Educators, Rabbis, Teachers, Center Workers and Counselors and Jewish Consciousness Raising: A Handbook of Fifty Experiential Exercises for Jewish Groups* (Rochester, New York, 1977); and Edward Kiner and Norman Shub, *Feeling Judaism; Interpersonal Explorations in Values* (Columbus, Ohio, 1976).

14. The annual editions of *Roundup of New Programs in Jewish Education* — after 1976 these collections were issued as separate publications — were published by, and are available from, the American Association for Jewish Education in New York, New York. All references and quotations have been culled from these publications.

Final institutionalization of the new education came with the formation of CAJE, the Coalition for Alternatives in Jewish Education. An outgrowth of the North American Students Network, CAJE, now officially recognized by the AAJE, represents the fourth generation of educators on the American-Jewish scene — being preceded by the *melamed* of pre-World War I, the progressive-minded *maskil* of the inter-war era, and the professionalized educator of the immediate post-World War II era. The national conferences of CAJE, all held on various college campuses, provide for its youthful devotees — and aging fellow-travellers — a revivalist experience, an amalgam of American Woodstock and the German/Jewish *Lehrhaus*. While, no doubt, many elements of “the *ruach*” that permeates CAJE conferences — the strumming of guitars and the dancing of Horas — will erode over time, its underlying philosophy, an unstructured and affective approach to teaching, will endure to the end of the century.¹⁵

* * *

Curricular design, as well as pedagogic technique, felt the impact of the new education. Bible study — even in the abridged form developed decades ago in *Pathways Through the Bible* — lost out to “relevancy,” the study of the Jewish community, ecology, or race relations. Where Bible studies remained a part of the curriculum, the approach took on a radical turn, with biblical narratives serving as a source of values-clarification and universalistic ethics rather than the pedagogic exposition of the God of Israel acting on the natural world and in history.¹⁶

Jewish holidays and rituals underwent similar revision, being taught, in many instances, within the context of contemporary social issues — the Passover Seder to cite one example, serving as an historical model for the civil-rights movement of third-world revolution. While many innovations were of a superficial character — *R’chov* Sesame as a device for learning Hebrew or a kazoo band for teaching Israeli songs — other innovations were of a more significant nature. Courses on human sexuality were introduced on several misguided assumptions — that a need, unfulfilled by school or family, for instruction in this area existed; that interest in a course on sex would carry over to the learning of Hebrew, history, or how to observe Jewish holidays; or that these sessions would tend to reduce the rising incidence of sexual deviancy.¹⁷

In addition to the Bible, the study of Hebrew became another casualty of the ’70s, although its decline had set in years earlier. The focus on

15. The literature published by CAJE is available from that organization. See, particularly, “Fourth Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education,” sponsored by Coalition for Alternatives in Jewish Education and Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York, August 23-28, 1979, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

16. Chomsky, “The Melton Approach to Teaching Bible,” *The Reconstructionist* (November, 1967): 22-25.

17. See the various issues of *Roundup of New Programs in Jewish Education*.

Hebrew for the school curriculum — over the opposition of the secular left, the Orthodox right, and universalist-minded Reform Jews — that had been won by the Hebraists with the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, has been downward since then. The reasons are many: the passing of the generation for whom the Hebrew language and literature served as an ideological and cultural imperative; the acculturative process in American-Jewish life, particularly evident in the third and fourth-generation, for whom Jewish identity is defined in formal religious or in non-Zionist, ethnic terms; a lack of committed and trained personnel; a decline in the number of hours and years of instruction; and the opportunities for acquiring the language and culture elsewhere — in a high school program, in Israel, or at the university. Efforts to maintain an acceptable level of Hebrew-language instruction — the flannel-boards of the '50s and the audio-visual devices of the '60s and '70s — failed, as will the computerized language-aids now being planned for the '80s.

The final blow to the Hebraic tradition came in the late '60s and '70s with the defection of the Conservative movement, the one religious body that initially shared this socio-cultural and ideological tradition. Shortly after the Six-Day War of 1967, Dr. Morton Siegel, the director of the movement's Commission on Jewish Education, declared that "we must teach our children . . . that *aliyah* [settling in Israel] is an option, and not a need."¹⁸ Formal legitimation of this movement away from the Zionist priority in Conservative ideology — and the diminution of the status of Hebrew for their schools — crystallized in the revised curriculum proposals adopted by the United Synagogue in 1978. The suggestion that there is a dichotomy between *Erez Yisrael* (the land of Israel) and *Medinat Yisrael* (the state of Israel), and the introduction of Holocaust study — shed light on the alterations taking place in the ideology of the Conservative movement, in particular, and of American Jewry as a whole.¹⁹

The reasons for the popularity of Holocaust study are not hard to discern.²⁰ Israel, always embattled and increasingly Westernized, has lost much of its former attractiveness and novelty. Moreover, unlike the Israeli/Arab conflict, the tragedy of the Holocaust is distant enough, simplistic enough, and moralistic enough to appeal to any and all — committed and marginal Jews, and non-Jew, alike. Remembering the Holocaust demands no ritual observance — neither fasting nor even a financial con-

18. Morton Siegel, "Comment," in *Jewish Education* (December, 1969): 24-25.

19. See Walter I. Ackerman, "Toward a History of the Curriculum of the Conservative Congregational School," *Jewish Education* (Spring, 1980): 19-26; *Ibid.* (Summer, 1980): 12-20; and "The New Curricula: Some Observations," *Conservative Judaism* (Fall, 1978): 43-62.

20. The literature providing a rationale for the teaching of the Holocaust is voluminous. Educators urging the incorporation of the Holocaust in the school curriculum include: William Chomsky, "Teaching the Shoah in Jewish Schools," *Jewish Education* (Spring and Summer, 1966): 174-78, and Shraga Arian, "Teaching the Holocaust," *Ibid.* (Fall, 1972): 41-46.

tribution; and, finally, it can be employed by Orthodox Jews, as Norman Bronznick has indicated in an essay on the theology of the Holocaust, to teach those of that persuasion to mend their spiritual ways — “not to discount sin as a possible root cause” of what happened to the Jews in Europe during World War II — and by liberal-minded Jews as an object lesson on where violations of civil rights can lead a nation. It is no desecration to the memory of the six million to suggest that the Holocaust cannot serve as a rationale for the continued vitality or literacy of American Jewry.²¹

* * *

Apart from curricular change within the classroom, the '70s produced an extensive variety of beyond-the-classroom experiences for the student and, where possible, for the family. As the synagogue-oriented Judaism of the '50s became passé, as marginality to traditional rites and rituals increased, as acculturation to the non-Jewish environment rose, as discipline in the classroom or homework outside of it declined, and as boredom with any event that preceded World War II deepened, the classroom came to be a very uncomfortable place for teachers and for those who administered the Jewish school. These trends, along with the growing popularity — and the outright pleasures — provided to the young by the activities of the adversarial culture, as well as its manipulative and experiential techniques, led Jewish educators to seek to supplement and, in some instances, abandon, the classroom and to substitute for the school-room experience a variety of other activities: “retreats,” camping, innovative religious services ranging from “soft-rock” to para-Hasidism, the *Shabbaton*, a Sabbath *Haggadah*, experiential courses on death-and-dying and other rites of passage in the life-cycle of the Jew, and civics, all of these designed to reach and, if possible, move the increasingly uninterested — and often hostile — student.

Both civics and family education were prime activities for the beyond-the-classroom approach that developed in Jewish education in

21. A sampling of Holocaust materials prepared for the classroom in the '70s, for both Jewish and non-Jewish students, includes: *Teaching and Commemorating the Holocaust*, by the National Curriculum Research Committee of the American Association for Jewish Education and published in *The Pedagogic Reporter* (Winter, 1974); Beverly Sanders, “The Holocaust, The Jewish Ordeal in Nazi Occupied Europe, 1933-1945 — A Resource Unit for High School Students,” *New York Teacher Magazine* (New York: United Federation of Teachers, 1974); Diane Roskies, *Teaching the Holocaust to Children: A Review and Bibliography* (New York, 1975); and Lenore Podietz, in *Analysis*, December, 1975, published by the Institute for Policy Planning and Research of the Synagogue Council of America, Washington, D.C. A judicious summary of the controversy in the Jewish community over the merits of incorporating the Holocaust into the school curriculum will be found in Paula E. Hyman, “New Debate on the Holocaust,” in *The New York Times Magazine* (September 14, 1980): 65 ff. The views of Rabbi Norman M. Bronznick are contained in “A Theological View of the Holocaust; A Traditional Approach for Jewish Education,” *Jewish Education* (Summer, 1973): 13-20.

the '70s. Focus on community ranged from fairly traditional introductions to the history of the local Jewish cemetery, "walkathons" and "phonathons" on behalf of the local federation and other charity campaigns, exercises in genealogy and oral history, ranging from the creation of a family-tree to interviewing an aging grandparent, a turn-of-the-century immigrant, or Jewish community figures. Perceiving this as a rationale for moving from the cognitive to the experiential, from the historical past to the more relevant present, the AAJE launched another commission — on Jewish civics — and proposed the adoption of a wide-ranging curriculum of social studies for the Jewish school. In addition to traditional bibliographical and curricular aids, the study of community was made appropriately experiential through the publication by the AAJE of *Dilemma — Allocating the Funds of the Jewish Community*, a role-playing and simulation game similar to *Gestapo*, created by the Alternatives group for Holocaust study, both being modelled on the Parker Brothers' *Monopoly* game.²²

The other major effort to preserve, or escape, the failing classroom experience was "family" education, also supported by the American Association for Jewish Education. While most educators contented themselves with a two-generational format for family education, one devised a tri-generational one. Another effort, entitled "The Car Pool Curriculum," promoted a dialogue between parents and their children designed to stimulate discussion "about ethical problems" — replete with weekly card bulletins and a multiple-choice format for discussing, recording, and tabulating the consensus reached in each auto on the way to and from school. From California came a proposal for the "conquest of the Jewish home" through an interdisciplinary team of theologians, social scientists and educators on the theoretical plane, and through the creation of a "para-professional psychological counselling group" on the practical level; from the Midwest came a proposal for creating a new discipline — *Menschology*. The United Synagogue joined the movement through PEP, a Parent Education Program of three levels. In Chicago, the Bureau of Jewish Education institutionalized family education by establishing a department for this express purpose; in another community, family participation stressed an evaluation of the school; and, in one Orthodox day-school, family education appropriately stressed knowledge and the observance of Jewish ritual — koshering a chicken or affixing the *mezuzah* to the doorpost. Said one proponent of family education: "The Jewish family has been discovered."²³

22. Benjamin Efron, "The Times Themselves Call for Jewish Civics," *The Pedagogic Reporter* (June, 1972): 3-4.

23. The rising commitment in the '70s to family education can be gleaned from: Isaac Toubin, "Family Education: A New Frontier?", *The Pedagogic Reporter* (Spring, 1977): 2-3; "The Winning of the Home: A New Frontier in Jewish Education," subject of the Seventh National Conference of the American Association for Jewish Education; Bernard Reisman, "Jewish Family Education," *The Pedagogic Reporter* (Spring, 1977): 4-10; and Paulette Benson

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In retrospect, it can be seen that the alacrity with which Jewish educators jumped on the bandwagon of radical school reform turned out to be both unseemly and unwise and, in the end, produced an educational regimen with greater weaknesses than its predecessor. Trendy administrators failed to perceive that beneath the formalism — “repressiveness” and “authoritarianism,” they called it — that characterized the typical congregational school of the ’50s, there lay a highly fragile and vulnerable institution and mode of learning (after all, even then, few students in these schools took homework, report-cards, attendance, grades, or promotions very seriously), and that the added measure of normlessness produced by the “innovations” instituted in the ’70s would further corrode, rather than enhance, the quality of education that these schools would deliver. In their haste to co-opt the counter-culture — or, in some instances, they may have misguidedly wanted to advance it — these educators failed to see that while John Holt’s educational “smorgasbord” might be effective in a secular school, where a youngster — bright and motivated and, from his earliest years, enveloped in a culture and language of great familiarity — will learn to read and write the English language regardless of the myriad of course offerings made available, the Hebrew language, the history, the calendar of the Jewish people, or the experience of a Passover Seder require the dedication of a knowledgeable teacher and the discipline of a structured curriculum. Further: they failed to perceive that while a pluralistic nation can afford and, indeed, may, at times, need a degree of “values clarification,” for a minority, swimming against the tide of a dominant culture and anxious to preserve some measure of historical continuity, the relativistic ideology and technique inherent in the new education can only further corrode the uniqueness of a group’s morale, language and value-system. Lastly, in their passion for making Jewish education more “imaginative,” “interesting,” and “meaningful,” all code words for the introduction of the adversarial culture into the classroom, these educators failed to perceive that much of the student rebellion stemmed from the ambiguities and contradictions in what these youngsters were being taught at home and at school: a chic lifestyle for the upper-class and a welfare state for the deprived, a universalistic morality and a particularistic ritual, and that their rebellion contained, at once, a protest against these anomalies, and a search — fulfilled, for many, once they joined a right-wing Yeshivah, the “Moonies,” or some other highly-disciplined sect — for structure and for norms. Permissiveness in dress-code, attendance, behavior and other elements of the counter-culture in the classroom led only to greater frustration, anger, excess, and contempt

and Sheny Bissell, *Divorce in Jewish Life and Tradition* (Denver, Colorado: Alternatives in Religious Education, 1977).

on the part of students searching for — and being denied — a worthwhile and clearly defined Jewish identity.

The enthusiasm with which Jewish educators embraced family education provides us with a further irony — and a question: whether an institution that has so clearly failed in the classroom is the proper instrument through which the resuscitation of values and structure for the Jewish family can be accomplished? Or, to put the matter this way: having failed to solve the problems of the classroom, were not Jewish educators ill-equipped to take on the burden of socio-cultural engineering for the Jewish community as a whole? While they may be laudable goals, the question arises as to whether family and sex education are ideas whose time has come, or whether they serve as convenient distractions — much like a Jewish "Peace Corps" for community projects, bureaucratic paperwork, committee formation and audio-visual programming — from the basic problems that must ultimately be faced within the confines of four classroom walls. Family education, along with another development of the '70s — community education, where the entire Jewish community serves as both the subject and the object of the Jewish educator — may well represent an effort to transcend the limitations of the classroom, the blackboard, and the need for a competent teacher — who is not there.²⁴

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Given these developments over the past decade and a half — accelerated acculturation, budgetary limitations, declining enrollments, and rising administration costs which are a consequence, in part, of demographic factors and, in part, of sheer lack of interest by many families in Jewish schooling — it is hard to see how this segment of Jewish communal endeavor, aside from the slowly expanding, yet increasingly costly, day-school, will be much improved in the future. Any consideration of this possibility must, in the end, confront the question of what the community, particularly parents, really want for their youngsters, the overwhelming percentage of whom are enrolled in the two-day-a-week afternoon school (largely Conservative) or one-day-a-week Sunday school (largely Reform). As Herbert Gans noted in his postwar studies of the Jews of Park Forest, many parents give their offspring a Jewish schooling with mixed motives, with a hidden — and oftentimes negative —

24. The failure of the American-Jewish community to produce teachers of quality for its educational institutions is both a truism and a source of much discussion in the field. A definitive treatment, for its time, is Oscar Janowsky, ed., *The Education of American Jewish Teachers* (Boston, 1967). An early assessment of Israelis as teachers is Hyman Chanover, "Israeli Teachers: Their Training and Teaching in American Jewish Schools: Findings of an Exploratory Survey," in Janowsky, *Op. cit.*, pp. 227-51. The conventional wisdom — and solutions — for the solving of the crisis of personnel for the Jewish school will be found in Alvin I. Schiff, "The Manpower Crisis in Jewish Education: Real Problems and Realistic Solutions," *Jewish Education* (June, 1968): 12-23.

agenda.²⁵ It is questionable, given the generational and historical alterations in the character of American Jewry, whether the motives of Jewish parents, apart from those who opt for the day-school or intensive after-school education, are superior to those of parents of the late '40s, whether they really want much more than a patina of Jewishness for the children, under the assumption that more than this will be dysfunctional to an upper-class lifestyle that they inherited, achieved, or hoped to achieve. As a consequence, for those who live outside of the environs of the great metropolitan centers opportunities for good Jewish education have almost vanished. A diminution in the quality of personnel, a decrease in hours of instruction, textbook, curricular and pedagogic innovations, have all taken their toll. Some observers have found comfort in the notion that in the United States these institutions were never central to the quality of American Jewish life — a perception that, while true in a limited sense, sheds more light on current ideology than on current needs.

* * *

It is likely that the furor over the quality of Jewish education — indeed, there are current signs of this taking place — will diminish in the '80s. On the one hand, the majority of American Jews, who are no longer in touch with a tradition of literacy, observance, or ideology that stems from their European origins, will rest content with what is currently being dispensed by so many congregational schools. (Indeed, a marked escalation of quality, in hours of instruction, observance, or ideology by the congregational school has always been a source of irritation to many of its members.) Those for whom the historical memory is still alive will opt, where they can, for an intensive afternoon school, truly an endangered species on the American/Jewish scene, or, more likely, like many religiously-minded Catholics and Protestants, they will opt for the day-school. Given the escalating costs of education of any kind, the question to be ultimately confronted — apart from the Orthodox sector of the Jewish community, for whom the primacy of the educational experience provides a measure of insulation from the personal or communal budgetary priorities — is the role of the various community federations that establish the principal priorities in Jewish communities across the land. To date, federations have been reluctant to move in a massive way into this area of communal endeavor, and for several reasons: ideology — many members of the corporate community place community relations or the expansion of social and medical services above Jewish educational needs; a reluctance to arouse the enmity of congregational leadership — lay and clerical — for whom the school is often their institutional *raison d'être*; a

25. Herbert Gans, "The Origin and Growth of a Jewish Community in the Suburbs: A Study of the Jews of Park Forest," in Marshall Sklare, ed., *The Jews, Social Patterns of an American Group* (New York, 1958), pp. 216-17.

reluctance to become deeply involved in the programmatic aspects of their constituent agencies; and, lastly, a conviction that increased funding — aside from the establishment of day-schools — will not necessarily lead to a commensurate, or even acceptable, improvement in the product.

Whether this can be accomplished to any significant degree, given the accelerating and pervasive acculturative processes at work in almost all segments of American-Jewish life is questionable, at best. Positive and meaningful steps towards an improvement in what is currently provided will, perforce, depend upon the corporate community's desire and ability to cut through the ideological sterility, pedagogic mindlessness, bureaucratic wastefulness and sheer incompetence of what, in recent decades, has made both the Jewish educational effort and its practitioners the object of derision from without the profession and of self-denigration among the cognoscenti from within. Without radical alterations, the "reordering [of] priorities" within each community and on a national level, the sort of major revision in funding that was called for in the 1972 *Task Force Report on the Future of the Jewish Community in America* and never carried out, the future of the Jewish educational enterprise, apart from the day-school movement, is a bleak one. Solutions that aim at resolving the massive problems confronting the educational sector of the organized Jewish community on an "incremental" basis will be of little consequence.

The growth in many communities of private schooling — the day-school — is the single positive development in Jewish education in the last quarter century. Of the other instruments through which the quality of Jewish education is to be improved — civics, family education, *Shabbatons*, and the like — only intensive educational programs in Israel and, to a much lesser degree, summer camping, may provide a substantive and effective return for funds expended. And here, too, there are important qualitative differences between one program and another, between a superficial summer outing of six or eight weeks here or in Israel, on one hand, or the United Synagogue Camp Ramah and the Union of American Hebrew Congregation's Eisendrath program that provides for a year of study in an Israeli high school, on the other. While experience demonstrates that neither of these programs provides a surefire cure for what ails our educational efforts, it is equally certain that only a major departure from what we are currently doing will enable us to begin to overcome the syndrome of what Harold Himmelfarb, in a seminal essay, so aptly labelled the "culturally deprived" Jewish child.²⁶

In addition to institutional alterations, the corporate community would do well to undertake what bureaucracies find so hard to do, re-ordering priorities within the educational structure itself, reviewing the

26. Harold S. Himmelfarb, "Jewish Education for Naught: Educating the Culturally Deprived Jewish Child," *Analysis*, September, 1975, published by the Institute for Jewish Policy Planning and Research of the Synagogue Council of America, Washington, D.C.

deployment of funds on a local and national level, particularly the disproportional sums being expended for administrative overhead, on local bureaus of Jewish education that have, to a large degree, outlived their original purposes and functions, and the wasteful duplication and sheer inanity of the multitude of publicity blurbs, publications, and other classroom accoutrements of the various subsectarian commissions and associations of Jewish education that dot the educational landscape. To continue to pour tens of millions of dollars into this purely administrative segment of Jewish education, while the classroom remains bereft of the single element of any consequence in the educational effort — the teacher — is an open-ended prescription for disaster. Jewish schooling will succeed only with an informed, competent, and committed figure in the classroom, one who can help bridge the chasm between the highly Americanized environment surrounding the third- or fourth-generation youngster and the particularistic goals of Jewish education.²⁷

A final word: recent studies in education demonstrate clearly that the educational enterprise of any society — its techniques, goals and values — cannot be divorced from the greater society from which it is derived. Similarly, the fate of Jewish education rests ultimately on the ideology of the American-Jewish community, what priorities it sets for itself and with what skills and intensity of purpose these goals are pursued. To date, from the late nineteenth century to the present, Jewish education has been of only marginal concern to the organized Jewish community — in terms of funding, personnel, institutional arrangements, and pedagogic technique. This posture has stemmed, in part, from a concern with issues and institutions presumed to be more vital than Jewish education — community relations, Israel, or socio-medical services to the community, and, in part, out of a conviction that decisions in the field of Jewish education had best be left to Jewish educators. Developments in the last two decades reveal both these reasons to be fallacious. We are at a point where the continuity of the American-Jewish community is too critical a matter to be left to educators alone. The priorities that American Jewry sets for itself are more than a mirror of its ideology; they are, at the same time, a prognostication of its future.

27. The differences on funding between the welfare funds and federations, on one hand, and the Jewish educators, on the other, emerge in the following: Charles Zibbel, "Emerging Changes in Planning for Jewish Education," *Jewish Education* (Fall, 1963): 15-22; "Federations and Jewish Education," *Ibid.* (October, 1968): 31-35; "Some Issues in Jewish Education — A Community Viewpoint," typescript from the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, New York, April 26, 1972; "Federations, Synagogues and Jewish Education in the 70's," *Jewish Education* (Fall, 1974): 40-45; and Alvin I Schiff, "Funding Jewish Education — Whose Responsibility?" *Jewish Education* (Summer, 1973): 6-12.

The Audacity of Expressing the Inexpressible: The Relation Between Moral and Aesthetic Considerations in Holocaust Literature

ZSUZSANNA OZSVATH and MARTHA SATZ

NEVER HAS THERE BEEN A LITERARY TOPIC that engenders as many paradoxes as the Holocaust. As the venture is discussed, warnings, restrictions, and ambivalences multiply. The contradictory injunctions, to speak over and over again and to remain silent, are voiced often by the very same writer. All admit that every expression is inadequate, even as they recognize the most sacred obligation to tell the story. The evaluation of Holocaust literature can convolute its potential critic, demanding at one time historical, moral, philosophical, and aesthetic considerations, all under the aegis of the profoundly inexplicable. In particular, moral imperatives intertwine themselves with artistic issues creating a complex dilemma for those who read and judge that literature.

Initially paradoxical is the demand of many writers on the Holocaust that the only appropriate and adequate acknowledgement of what has happened be silence. Such a demand is voiced, for example, by George Steiner, who believes that language itself is guilty of the atrocities of Auschwitz. As he remarks: "Words that are saturated with lies or atrocity do not easily resume life."¹ He argues that if language, the apparent vehicle of logic, could bear the inherent illogicality undergirding the death camps, then it must forever be suspect. Paul Celan, in contrast, claims that "... language ... remained whole. It had to go through being unanswered, being mute, to go through thousands of eclipses of death-bringing speeches, [but] it survived and reemerged ... enriched by all it

1. Georg Steiner, "K," in *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* (New York: Atheneum, 1967), p. 123. Elie Wiesel, too, in "The Holocaust as Literary Inspiration," in *Dimensions of the Holocaust* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University, 1977), p. 6 (all further reference to this work will be to HLI and cited with page numbers), claims that "... after Auschwitz words are no longer innocent."

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had suffered.”² Jerzy Kosinski, recognizing the problem, looks for new means of expression, appropriate to “*l’univers concentrationnaire*.” He explains the background of *The Painted Bird* in this light: “My purpose in writing a novel was to examine ‘this new language’ of brutality and its consequent new counter-language of anguish and despair.”³

Overshadowing the cataclysm undergone by language is the more sweeping ontological problem of the abyss between words and experience, a gap which yawns unfathomably in portraying anguish. As Elie Wiesel reflects: “We do try to put the experience into words. But can we? That is my question. Language is poor and inadequate. The moment it is told, the experience turns into betrayal.”⁴ And Jean Améry echoes: “The pain was what it was. Beyond that there is nothing to say.”⁵ Wolfgang Borchert, too, recognizes this incommensurability of words and experience, particularly brutalizing experience:

... who among us, who then, oh, who knows a rhyme for the rattle of lungs shot to pieces, a rhyme for the scream at the gallows, who knows the metre, the rhyme, for rape, who knows a metre for the bark of machine-guns, a sound for the now-smothered scream of a dead horse’s eye, in which no further heaven is mirrored, not even the blazing of villages, what press has a sign for the rust-red of freight cars, this world-in-flames red, this dried-up blood-encrusted red on white human skin?⁶

But writers who recognize language’s inadequacies for portraying atrocity, raise an issue merely prefatory to a larger moral reservation, that, beyond the intrinsic aesthetic problems, an artistic treatment of the Holocaust is, quite simply, wrong. As Michael Wyschogrod argues: “Art takes the sting out of suffering. It transforms suffering into a catharsis for which people are willing to pay money to experience . . . [Thus,] any attempt to transform the holocaust into art demeans the holocaust and must result in poor art.”⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, too, harshly criticizes the

2. Paul Celan, “*Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der Freien Hansestadt Bremen*,” in *Ausgewählte Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 128, translation ours. All further reference to this work will be to “*Ansprache*” and cited with page numbers.

3. Jerzy Kosinski, *The Painted Bird*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976), p. xii.

4. “Jewish Values in the Post-Holocaust Future: A Symposium,” *JUDAISM* (1967): 284; in HLL, p. 7, he flatly states that “ . . . a novel about Treblinka is either a novel or not about Treblinka.”

5. *At the Mind’s Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor of Auschwitz and Its Realities*, trans. Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella P. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), p. 33.

6. Wolfgang Borchert, “In May, in May Cried the Cuckoo,” in *The Man Outside*, trans. David Porter (1971; rept. New York: New Directions, 1981), p. 203. With this diatribe against poets and poetry, Borchert raises a problem of self-referentiality, which emerges again and again. In his unrelenting listing of human suffering, he in fact comes close to expressing what his view claims is inexpressible, the horror of recent human experience. In “Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit,” *Transition*, 49, No. 5 (1968): 981, Samuel Beckett poses the same problem of self-refutation, unifying form and content: “There is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, no power to express . . . together with the obligation to express.”

7. Michael Wyschogrod, “Some Theological Reflections on the Holocaust,” *Response*, 25 (1975): 68.

would-be artists of the Holocaust.⁸ He claims that art, no matter what its content, because it transfigures reality, because it incorporates subject matter into an aesthetic order, has the potential of giving pleasure. Furthermore, art, with its inherent distancing effect and tradition of tragedy, can tolerate the most devastating evil as an element in the moral cosmic order. Thus, an aesthetic work, by its very nature, robs the ultimate horror from this nadir of human existence. Wyschogrod's and Adorno's arguments are powerful, deriving their strength not only from the threat of revictimization of the Holocaust sufferers but, more importantly, from the moral danger of diminishing the significance of their experience.⁹ This issue is so central to any consideration of Holocaust literature that the premises of both arguments must be carefully examined.

First of all, one cannot assume, as these two authors seem to do, that aesthetic experience is inevitably pleasurable, for aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic enjoyment are not equivalent. We can all think of instances where our reactions to an aesthetic experience are shock, horror, bafflement or insight. To suppose that aesthetic appreciation is nothing but pleasurable seems to assume a kind of naive nineteenth-century Utilitarianism à la Bentham and Mill. However, perhaps Adorno and Wyschogrod are warning that the revered role of art should not in any way uplift the Holocaust. But such a position presupposes that the nature of art is fixed, if not stagnant. One can certainly envision that art, as it stretches itself to portray and incorporate this unparalleled event, can create a new status for itself.¹⁰ Adorno's second argument also assumes art's continuity with the past. Although there is an aesthetic tradition, rooted in Greek drama and continuing through Western history, which combines human suffering with the inevitable reinstatement of the moral order through suffering, this world-view, this metaphysical model can change. Indeed, twentieth-century art characteristically presents evil and chaos without any complementary balancing force.

Clearly, inherent aesthetic and moral difficulties obstruct those who

8. Theodor W. Adorno, "Engagement," in *Noten zur Literatur III* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965), pp. 109-35.

9. In "A Plea for the Dead," in *Legends of Our Times* (New York: Avon, 1968), p. 221, (all further reference to this work will be to PD and cited with page numbers) Elie Wiesel, too, notes this problem in connection with Holocaust writing:

... I know I am still incapable of deciphering — for to do so would be to blaspheme — the frightened smile of that child torn away from his mother and transformed into a flaming torch ... I prefer to stand on the side of the child and of the mother who died before they understood.

10. In *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1975), p. 30, (all further references to this book will be to HLI and cited with page numbers), Lawrence Langer claims that the imagery and language created by certain Holocaust writers do translate "... the agony of annihilation into the painful harmonies — and discords — of an art of atrocity."

would contemplate portraying the Holocaust in art. Hence, the demand for silence, for Borges' suggestion that we simply pause over the name of each victim in sheer reverence. Yet, simultaneously, the paradox emerges: silence, too, is forbidden because of the urgent twin obligations inextricably bound together — to honor and revere the victims and to tell their stories with such honesty and power that they cannot be forgotten.¹¹ And it is known, simply known, that if one wants something of profound significance to be communicated, then the tool, developed and carefully honed for that purpose, is art.

What, then, do those who demand silence, who chafe at art with such content, who yearn for reverence, ultimately desire? Beneath their critique lies the fundamental desideratum that aesthetic works about the Holocaust must primarily communicate the dimensions — historical, moral, and metaphysical — of this monumental event. Their arguments suggest that artistic tools must be drawn into the service of this herculean task, and that the converse is impermissible: portrayal of the Holocaust cannot be subordinated to aesthetic goals. Those who advance such arguments would be morally aghast, as indeed we all might be, at the implications of a writer like Terence Des Pres in a recent review. In discussing Holocaust memoirs in general he remarks:

There is, however, a problem. . . . there is a terrible sameness in accounts of Hitler's genocide. The more we learn about it, the more we find individual destinies meeting within an increasingly predictable story of ghettos, of trains and camps and the final seep of ash into mud. . . . from these narratives we hardly expect refined portraits of spirits in adversity.¹²

Such a critical stance turns Holocaust literature on its ear, railing against it for "the predictability of its plot" and the absence of refinement in devastating destruction.

To guard against such critical perversions stands the underlying premise of the critics of Holocaust literature that we have discussed: the unequivocal demand that moral criteria be applied to Holocaust literature. Naturally, those who see literary art as purely formal and aesthetic, who wish to apply only internal criteria, would object. However, it is clear that different kinds of literature, by their nature, invoke different aesthetic standards. For example, historical fiction renders such factors as accuracy and fidelity to the time to which it refers relevant, the stringency of their application varying with the work itself. But Holocaust fiction is not only historical fiction but, *a priori*, philosophical fiction as well. Since its subject is a monumental moral and metaphysical event, it declares itself to be open to moral evaluations. Once a work has raised the issue of

11. As Elie Wiesel says, "I don't have the right not to communicate," in Harry James Cargas' "Elie Wiesel and the Holocaust," *Commonweal*, 10 Sept. 1976: 584-596.

12. Terence Des Pres, "Eros, God, and Auschwitz," rev. of *An Interrupted Life: The Diaries of Etty Hillesum, 1941-1943*, intr. J. G. Gaarlandt, trans. Arno Pomerans, *The New York Times Book Review*, 29 January 1984: 1.

the Holocaust, the way it incorporates this horrific phenomenon in its moral scheme, its aesthetic scheme becomes crucially important. Contemporary criticism has increasingly emphasized the significance of ideological critique, demonstrating over and over again that literary texts and their criticism and evaluation cannot be severed from the ideology of which the works are a part. As Wayne Booth has recently asserted in quite a different context, literary works perform moral acts.¹³ The contemporary contribution to the debate about the aesthetic relevance of moral and ideological criticism continues a perennial conflict over the boundaries between morality and aesthetics, a question which has been with us since at least the time of Plato.

Yet, we do not have to see conflicts over Holocaust literature as just one more chapter in this conflict, an opportunity to declare oneself on the side of aesthetic inviolability or in the camp of those who would make moral claims on art. The question does not have to be framed in a bivalent fashion capable of only an affirmative or a negative reply — yes, art can be evaluated morally; no, it cannot be. Rather, one can see these questions on a continuum on which both the nature of the moral issue and of the work of art is taken into consideration in framing the answer. Such a position renders aesthetic evaluation an organic process rather than a rule-bound one, a description which, in fact, squares with critical practice. In this way, one can distinguish Holocaust literature from other literature. Just as the issue of the Holocaust presents a paradigmatic case for theologians debating the problem of evil, so it does for literary critics in discussing the relevance of moral criteria in assessing literature. The unparalleled nature of the event dictates the degree to which ethical standards pertain. Thus, if moral issues are ever to be invoked in the evaluation of literature, then they should be in the case of Holocaust literature. And, of course, there are times when moral issues must be brought to bear.

Holding this ethical consideration in the foreground, the present essay will examine three very different works, ranging over time and style and, most importantly, in the sophistication and obtrusiveness of their literary techniques, both to enrich our understanding of the parameters of acceptable aesthetic testaments of the Holocaust and our appreciation of the standards applied to them. The works are: Elie Wiesel's *Night*, Jerzy Kosinsky's *The Painted Bird*, and D. M. Thomas' *The White Hotel*.¹⁴ The primary question to be addressed to these works is to what extent do their

13. Wayne Booth, "Freedom of Interpretation: Bakhtin and the Challenge of Feminist Criticism," *Critical Inquiry*, 9 (1982): 55.

14. Elie Wiesel, *Night*, trans. Stella Rodway, forward François Mauriac (New York: Avon, 1969). All further reference to this work will be to *Night* and cited in the text with page numbers; Jerzy Kosinsky, *The Painted Bird* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965). All further reference to this work will be to *PB* and cited in the text with page numbers; D. M. Thomas, *The White Hotel* (New York: Viking, 1981). All further reference to this work will be to *WH* and cited in the text with page numbers.

artistic elements conflict with the moral demand upon them: that they convey the experience of the Holocaust in its human, moral and metaphysical dimensions.

Night, at first sight, is the straight-forwardly factual account of the fate of the Jews in Hungary during the German occupation; it does not seem literary at all. Yet, upon careful reading, Wiesel's narrative does emerge as artistic.¹⁵ This chronicle of the author's experience, as a boy journeying from his small town of Sighet to Auschwitz, embodies elements which, by repetition and variation, become themes and motifs, the warp and woof of the work's fabric. The dichotomy of knowledge, the struggle to apprehend God, the distortion of love under extreme duress, and an insight which leads not to growth but fragmentation, structure this historical account.

Although *Night* is presented chronologically, a thematic chord dramatically sounds in its opening with the introduction of one of two figures who are visionary in recognizing the significance of the evil that has touched them. The account begins with the boy's religious instructor who sees and tries to communicate the inconceivable. The first words of the text, "They called him Moché the Beadle . . ." introduce a character who embodies premonition, dark metaphysical apprehension, and theological question, asked and answered. The young boy, anticipating his mentor's role, expresses the conviction that Moché " . . . would draw me with him into eternity, into that time when question and answer would become *one*" (*Night*, p. 14). Paradoxically true to Eliezer's perception, the Beadle does impart knowledge of ultimate truths, precipitating the boy's religious understanding. However, instead of divine wisdom, Eliezer learns of absolute evil. Likewise, the other prescient figure, Madame Schachter, with her vision of the fire, forebodes and expresses the community's universal fate: "I can see a fire! There are huge flames! It is a furnace!" (*Night*, p. 35). Wiesel, beginning his account with Moché and spotlighting the figure of Madame Schachter, dichotomizes the universe and separates two planes of knowledge, the pre-Holocaust understanding and the cataclysmic perception of evil.

15. Whereas Ted L. Estes emphasizes the documentary status of *Night*, referring to Wiesel who said " . . . the story should be read in view of this statement: 'I swear that every word is true!' " (*Elie Wiesel* [New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980], p. 17), (all further reference to this work will be to *EW* and cited with page numbers), Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi claims that although Wiesel's fiction is grounded in fact, " . . . its value is primarily spiritual rather than documentary." ("The Holocaust Writer and the Lamentation Tradition: Responses to Catastrophe in Jewish Literature," in *Confronting the Holocaust: The Impact of Elie Wiesel*, ed. Irving Greenberg and Alvin H. Rosenfeld [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978], p. 143); and Langer says that in *Night*, "Wiesel the writer . . . has transcended history and autobiography and used the imagery of atrocity and his own experience to involve the non-participant in the essence of its world" (*HLI*, p. 83).

A second theme arising from the bifurcation of knowledge is the writer's struggle to comprehend the world metaphysically. From a securely religious perception, he is pushed to a rebellion against God, alternating among questions, accusations, and despairing denials, but without resolving the ultimate quandary.¹⁶ Although at times it appears that the excruciating physical crush has annihilated Eliezer's need for transcendence, his metaphysical speculations recur again and again. The search for God, the acknowledgement of His absence, and the search for Him again parallel the first theme of the book, the struggle to reconcile incompatible planes of knowledge.

An analogue of the boy's pervasive concern with God is his all-consuming focus on his father, which, if anything, is the dominant theme of the work. But even this bond, revered and sanctified by the voice in the narrative, is, in Auschwitz, subject to doubt, corruption, and betrayal. Indeed, Eliezer's imprisonment and ordeal become the chronicle of the different nuances, feelings, and contrary pulls in his relationship to his father. As they enter the camp, he doesn't care whether he lives or dies, only that he remains with his father. Yet, as time goes on, it becomes increasingly obvious that the centrality and sacredness of their relation is tortured and attenuated as they continue to survive at the limits of existence. Eventually, the boy is pushed into a devastating insight about the world of concentration camps: "Here there are no fathers, no brothers, no friends. Everyone lives and dies for himself alone" (*Night*, p. 112). Starving, cold, and exhausted, Eliezer thinks about abandoning his father. And he prays: "Don't let me find him! If only I could get rid of this dead weight, so that I could use all my strength to struggle for my own survival, and only worry about myself!" But then, recognizing what he has said, the boy reveals: "Immediately I felt ashamed of myself, ashamed forever!" (*Night*, p. 118). So, for the narrator, his ordeal means that he is not only physically crushed but morally stripped as well. He must rebel against God, he must betray his father. Hence, as he looks at himself after his liberation, he regards a corpse. As critics have noted, the book, appropriately enough, is an inverted *Bildungsroman*, the German form in which a young boy, by undergoing trying and difficult circumstances, learns

16. As a matter of fact, in "From *Night* to *The Gates of the Forest*," in *Response to Elie Wiesel*, ed. Harry James Cargas (New York: Persea Books, 1978), p. 51, Cargas states that *Night* "defines the nature and charts the consequences of a loss of faith in the protagonist, Eliezer, as incident by incident, layer by layer, his trust in God and man is peeled away. It is this 'peeling down' process which constitutes the essential structure of *Night* and enables us to see it as whole . . ." And in *The Vision of the Void: Theological Reflections on the Works of Elie Wiesel* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University, 1979), p. 20, Michael Berenbaum notes that the struggle between life and death takes place in *Night* in a void " . . . of personal separation from God, the void of meaninglessness in life, and the void of God's absence in history"

from them and achieves maturity.¹⁷ In this case, as a result of his experience, Eliezer loses his humanity.

In addition to the shaping thematic structure, the work has other literary elements as well — resonant phrases and striking imagery. When Eliezer's father is first summoned to learn the news of the deportation, the boy remarks: "The good story he had been in the middle of telling us was to remain unfinished" (*Night*, p. 22). Such a sentence stands as emblematic of the whole. And the description of the town as they leave grippingly captures the metamorphosis from the familiar, the traditional, and the comforting to the chaotic, the death-bringing:

The street was like a market place that had suddenly been abandoned. Everything could be found there: suitcases, portfolios, briefcases, knives, plates, banknotes, papers, faded portraits. . . . Everywhere rooms lay open. Doors and windows gaped onto the emptiness. Everything was free to anyone, belonging to nobody. . . . An open tomb (*Night*, p. 27).

Night, in spite of its status as memoir, is more than a factual chronicle of the Holocaust aesthetically unembroidered. As the foregoing discussion has emphasized, the narrated events are structured around themes — the thunderbolt of unimagined and previously unimaginable understanding, the struggle with the relationship to God, and the confrontation between the spiritual and physical even in the most basic and loving of human relationships. Yet, these themes of Wiesel's book, particularized in the case of Eliezer, are, in fact, the universal issues of the Holocaust: the necessity to understand and absorb incomprehensible evil, the confrontation with God's apparent abandonment of His people, and the infinitely repeated agony of each Jewish family physically torn asunder and psychologically devastated by unspeakable degradation and inhumanity. And, too, the inverted *Bildungsroman* structure of the account is appropriate to a people losing its metaphysical innocence forever. The imagery and structure underline the horror of Auschwitz rather than distract from it. Thus, the power of *Night* as a document of the Holocaust owes much of its intensity to its literary quality. The concerns which structure the work and shape the boy's experience are the pervasive and general concerns of the victims and Wiesel's artistry renders his private, as some would have it, incommunicable experience, apprehendable to those uninitiated in horror.

Night, which does not readily yield its literary elements, serves as stark contrast to the *Painted Bird*, which presents itself as an imaginative allegory far removed from any events of the real world, specifically the Holocaust.¹⁸ This work, episodic in character, imaginistically weaves its

17. See Langer, *HLI*, p. 75, who says that *Night* " . . . yields the effect of an authentic Bildungsroman — except that Eliezer becomes the initiate into death rather than life . . . " and Lawrence S. Cunningham, who sees the novel as ad reversal of " . . . the Biblical story of the Exodus " ("Elie Wiesel's Anti-Exodus," *Americana*, 27 [Apr. 1974]: 325-27).

18. See, for example, Stanley Corngold, who sees the novel as chiefly artistic: " . . . it aims to

events together by their grotesque, mythological, hyperbolic qualities, demonstrating the indifference of nature, the cruelty of humanity, and the isolation and separation of each individual person.

The world that the young protagonist inhabits is dark and superstition-governed, populated by real monsters and evil beings more grotesque and perverse than any which the most fearful childish imagination could summon, a world where spells, giants, and witches reign. As the boy is plunged into this new existence, dark beliefs and magical, macabre ontology gradually encroach upon and dominate his understanding. Cruelty and perversity assume archetypal dimensions, overwhelming his attempts to gain control and comprehension. For whatever he tries — spells, incantations, and prayers — all prove equally futile against what he comes to recognize as the dominion of evil forces. Indeed, evil is portrayed as the master of the universe in all its aspects, both its natural constituents and human ones.¹⁹ Even without the intrusion of man, creatures devour each other. But when human beings intercede, the cruelty becomes more perverse; when man malevolently paints a bird so that it is unrecognizable as one of the same species, then it is cruelly pecked to death by the flock.

The boy, who is suffering the same fate as the painted bird, tries to understand the alienating nature of his coloration, the cause of his being attacked again and again. As he arrives at each place, his strange appearance earns him the same hostile greetings — blows, whippings, torture — as if these had become the customary human salutation. Likewise, his departure from each place is accompanied by abrupt violence, ending his transitory bonds. However, outsiders are not the only ones who are so devastatingly treated; atrocity and cruelty are the most pervasive characteristics of human interactions in the domain portrayed.

The degradation of human intercourse is most clearly revealed in what substitutes for the potentially most uplifting communication, love-making. Human sexual contact in the work is characteristically and almost exclusively hostile. There is sexual intercourse with rabbits and with he-goats, and a rape with a bottle of manure. In fact, the boy's reflections on the least perverse sexual act in the book exemplifies human relations as a whole: "So that's what love was: savage as a bull prodded with a spike; brutal, smelly, sweaty. This love was like a brawl in which man and woman wrested pleasure from each other, fighting, incapable of thought, half stunned, panting, less than human" (*Painted Bird*, 188).

The lack of intimacy in the most intimate of all human acts is charac

fuse into rapture the sensory stimulation of language and the feeling of intelligibility." ("Jerzy Kosinski's *The Painted Bird*: Language Lost and Regained," *Mosaic*, No. 4 [1973]: 1953).

19. As a matter of fact, in "The Narrator of *The Painted Bird*: A Case Study," *Renascence*, 24, No. 4 (1972): 198, Meta Lale and John Williams claim that the book is nothing but a representation of man's depravity.

teristic of a realm in which no dialogue appears between any human beings. It is a domain in which the hero with no name is finally reduced to worldlessness as the action of the narrative reaches its inevitable low-point — when his fellow human beings attempt to drown him in a pool of defecation. The horror, the unremitting and progressive horror of the book, is demonstrated by the exploration of the baseness and depths to which human beings can descend — a universal theme. Yet, pervasively and insistently, Holocaust motifs insinuate themselves into the narrative identifying “*l’univers concentrationnaire*.” The trains carrying the doomed Jews pass by, and the relics from their lives float into this other world like coded messages from a distant planet. Jews fall from the train, to receive the kind of greetings that the boy himself has received, but, unlike him, they quickly die or are turned over to the Germans. And, as the protagonist tries to understand his situation, his dilemma, the insane universe becomes one with the historical circumstances of the Holocaust. He wonders: “. . . what gave people of one color of eyes and hair such power over other people?” (*Painted Bird*, p. 103). And in his childishly clear-sighted way he sees a solution: “Wouldn’t it be easier to change people’s eyes and hair than to build big furnaces and then catch Jews and Gypsies to burn in them?” (*Painted Bird* p. 113).

The Painted Bird, aesthetically refined rather than specifically biographical and historical, is allegorical, reveling in its elaborate and fulsome, grotesque invention. Kosinski creates an unbearable objective correlative to the ultimate horror, of humanity reduced to the animal, of the forces of evil allowed to reign unchecked. In fact, he has produced the unfathomable, incomprehensible horror of the world gone mad and has furnished unmistakable clues that what he intends is the Holocaust.

Yet, there are questions to be asked about *The Painted Bird*: by inflating the evil into the mythological and archetypal, does Kosinski render the Nazi atrocities an exemplification of the human potential for cruelty and thereby deny the Holocaust its uniqueness? Does his straying from the literal events of Nazi Germany dilute the devastation of the real event? Or, rather, does such an account simply approach the incomprehensible from a different angle, communicating the power of its personal devastation? Here, we have a problematic case for Holocaust aesthetics, one in which the sensitive critic must sift through conflicting moral interpretations of the aesthetic feat that constitutes *The Painted Bird*. The evaluation of the work illustrates the complexities of the moral issues involved. Whatever the answers to these questions, one must admit that *The Painted Bird* succeeds in uniting the cosmic and individual horror characterizing the Holocaust.

The White Hotel, D. M. Thomas’ complex and tightly structured novel, a formalistic, artistic attempt to deal with the Holocaust, raises the

issue of moral and artistic conflict in a troublesome and critical fashion.²⁰ The book takes a phenomenon — a young woman's life, particularly her symptoms — and explores it by artistic means, poetry, dream, fantasy, and through psychoanalysis, the preferred intellectual tool of enlightenment. In order to illuminate this young woman's soul, the novel thematically, stylistically, and imagistically interweaves diverse sections. The parts mirror each other and resonate with the notes struck in complementary units. Also, *The White Hotel* attempts to incorporate two contradictory themes. On the one hand, the structure and content of the book imply that both human and aesthetic investigation is insufficient. In spite of the best exercise of Freudian methodology, the elucidation of different perspectives, and the moments available to the reader of luminous insights, according to the perspective of the novel, it is impossible to understand another human being — for both the instrument and object of study, the mind, is opaque. Human comprehension is fragile, itself always capable of falling victim to its own subjectivity, as offhandedly illustrated by a footnote to Freud's case-history, suggesting that Freud's emphasis on a particular interpretation may be due to events in his own life: "Freud's unusual emphasis on the mother's role may have owed something to the recent death of his own mother, on 12 September 1930" (*White Hotel*, p. 142). The human psyche emerges as ultimately unknowable, a thesis which Freud, in this work, attributes to Heraclitus "The soul of man is a foreign country, which cannot be approached or explored" (*White Hotel*, p. 195-6). Exemplifying this principle, Lisa's symptoms, we eventually learn, besides their psychological content, are mystical as well. They are prescient, foretelling her fate. And her fate, as a victim of Babi Yar, diminishes and negates baroquely intense attempts to uncover the mystery of the human soul. The narrator explicitly conveys this thesis, thereby underlining the dramatic point made by Babi Yar's appearance in the narrative:

[M]ost of the dead were poor and illiterate. But every single one of them had dreamed dreams, seen visions and had amazing experience, even the babes in arms (perhaps especially the babes in arms). Though most of them had never lived outside the Podol slum, their lives and histories were as rich and complex as Lisa Erdman-Berenstein's. If a Sigmund Freud had been listening and taking notes from the time of Adam, he would still not fully have explored even a single group, even a single person (*White Hotel*, p. 250).

20. D. M. Thomas, in "The Flight of D. M. Thomas," *The Washington Post*, 27 Jan. 1982, p. 83, col. 3, denies this:

I tend to use these cataclysms in society as metaphors for individual fates. People have talked a lot about "The White Hotel" as a Holocaust book, but it's almost accidental that she's half-Jewish . . . all of us end up in holocausts as individuals. It won't be a Nazi machine gun but the *death* is the same.

However, his text prominently displaying the terrible monument of Babi Yar belies his statement.

Yet, there is another theme as well. Despite the denials, the bulk of the novel testifies that explanation *is* possible, namely, as the fictionalized Freud mentions in one of his early letters, the *sexual* and the *death instinct* are very close. And, as a matter of fact, the novel for the most part concerns itself with substantiating this thesis.

The White Hotel essentially begins with the highly erotic poem of Lisa, the augmentation, explanation, and variation of which constitute the work. The poem is pervaded by destructive imagery — a storm, burning, falling, landslide, and mourners. Such imagery is plumbed by Freud and Lisa herself to uncover its psychological and sexual background. In each account, new dimensions of the images and new aspects of Lisa are exposed — her mother's love affair, her sexual molestation, her unsatisfactory sexual life with her husband. Deeper and deeper, as in a good psychoanalytic case-history, we are plunged into the psyche of Lisa. But wherever the reader is confronted with Lisa's inner life, the imagery remains the same, merging the erotic and the fatal. As she talks to Freud about her imaginary sexual encounter with her son, Lisa remarks: "... the stars/were huge over the lake, there was no room/for a moon, but the stars fell in our room/..." (*White Hotel*, p. 18), but then the imagery of devastation, presaging Babi Yar, dominates:

... the guests
fell through the sky. . . .
The women fell more slowly, almost drifting,
because their petticoats and skirts were galing,
the men fell through them, my heart was breaking, the women seemed to
rise not fall, a dance in which the men were lifting in light hands light ballerinas
high above their heads, the men were first to come to ground, and then
the women fell into the lake or trees, silently followed by a few bright skis.
(*White Hotel*, p. 26)

Thus, in her erotic imagination, Lisa unifies the sexual, the destructive, and the graphically accurate portrayal of her own demise. This integration is gruesomely culminated when the description of Babi Yar reveals that Lisa's pains in ovary and breast are bodily premonitions of the brutal attack — the kick of the soldier to her breast, the rape of his bayonet.

Lisa's union of the libidinal and the morbid is particularly significant for she is made to appear as symbolic of more general impulses. As Freud hints, "I began to see Frau Anna, not as a woman separated from the rest of us by her illness, but as someone in whom an hysteria exaggerated and highlighted a *universal* struggle between the life instinct and the death instinct" (*The White Hotel*, p. 128-29).²¹ Lisa's thoughts about a mass mur-

21. It is just at this juncture that some critics have claimed that the work does not succeed. In "A Novel of Neurosis and History," rev. of *The White Hotel* by D. M. Thomas, *The New York Times Book Review*, 15 March 1981, p. 26, Leslie Epstein remarks that "With this failure of the particular case and its 'universal aspect' to mesh, to hold, the novel unravels at its most critical point." In "To Babi Yar and Beyond," rev. of *The White Hotel* by D. M. Thomas, *The Nation*, (2 May 1981): 538-539, Thomas Flanagan makes similar criticisms.

derer also reinforce this view. After reading about his childhood, "... ten children in one room with their parents; living on dogs and rats; raped by an older sister; his father a drunken psychopath," Lisa concludes that his criminality was not his fault (*The White Hotel*, p. 177). As she says: "He killed because he needed to drink blood. One night . . . he had cut off the head of a sleeping swan on the lake and drunk its blood . . . he had dug up some of his victims long after and had sexual intercourse with them . . ." (*The White Hotel*, p. 178). And the reader learns that a million men had been reported as this murderer. In Thomas' view, monstrosity prevails. Thus, in spite of its denial, the novel does take an explanatory stance on the Holocaust. The annihilation of six million lives, it reveals, is simply a consequence of the general sexual repression of the society.²²

What emerges in the end is that the indubitable artistry of the book has served to integrate the psychological, the sexual, the twentieth century explanations of their workings, and the greatest atrocity of the twentieth century.²³ Is such a linking viable, artistically and morally? At the base of Freudian thought is the premise that to understand all is to forgive all. As Lisa decides that once one knows his background, one can only conclude that the murderer is not to blame for his crime, so Thomas takes great pains to trace the factors that have caused the Holocaust. The reader, in parallel fashion, can only conclude, as well, that no one is to blame for it. Is it morally and philosophically acceptable to assert that no one is morally culpable for the worst crime of the century, perhaps of all centuries, that we are to accept the Holocaust as simply a consequence of the sickness of the century?

And there are artistic flaws as well. Again and again, Thomas insists that psychanalytic and sexual explanations are inadequate to convey the human soul. The structure of the novel itself dwarfs Freudian explanation with the gruesome monument of Babi Yar. Yet in spite of the nov-

22. In fact, in an interview ("A Conversation with D. M. Thomas," released as part of a publicity packet by Pocket Books) D. M. Thomas links the two in a surprising way:

It suddenly occurred to me that psychoanalysis is a profoundly Jewish thing — an assertion of the Jewish mind and spirit against all this hate and hostility. Analysts were themselves a little Jewish enclave in Vienna and their patients were Jewesses. Their personal neuroses — so carefully and caringly studied by Freud — led up to the mass psychosis of the Holocaust.

23. The book, in general, has received superlative reviews. For example, in "No Reservations," rev. of *The White Hotel* by D. M. Thomas, *The New York Review of Books* (28 May 1981): 20, George Levine said that the work is "a novel of immense ambition and virtuosity." Flanagan (537) describes it as "a book of extraordinary beauty, power and audacity — powerful and beautiful in its conception, audacious in its manner of execution." And Victor A. Altshul, in rev. of *The White Hotel* by D. M. Thomas, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 138 (1981): 1134, praises Thomas expansively:

In its unblinking treatment of life's ultimate questions, in its presentation of multiple and contrasting styles of exposition, in the tightness and complexity of its construction, and in its sheer dramatic power, this book is reminiscent of the greatest novels of Faulkner. It is my hunch that history may justify the comparison.

el's explicit and artistic insistence that psychological investigation is incommensurable with the Holocaust, its structure belies its statement. Three-fourths of this work ostensibly about the Holocaust is taken up with psychoanalytic and personal material..

Finally, the book seems to be an exploitation of the Holocaust rather than its explication.²⁴ Ultimately, in spite of the honest and powerful portrayal of Babi Yar, the Holocaust emerges as a symbol for the psychological degeneration of the century, a culmination of the sexual repression and psychological ailments with which the novel painstakingly deals. In the end, the work subsumes the horrors of the Holocaust under psychological illness and thus reduces moral and metaphysical atrocity to comprehensible human size. By doing so, it trivializes and debases the occurrence, making tawdry and cheap something that is incomprehensibly grandiose in its evil.

What can be learned from our present investigation? First, it is clear that art is a powerful, unparalleled tool in projecting the contradictions, the devastation, the horror, and the incomprehensibility of the Holocaust. Aesthetic shaping, rather than alleviating the suffering or distracting from the devastation, communicates the textured planes of the personal, psychological, moral, and metaphysical. Yet art, too, has the power to produce grotesquery, a mocking of the event, a facile psychological explanation, a symbolic incorporation; art can diminish the Holocaust to serve the author's "grander" artistic purposes. In this case, the critics can legitimately be morally and aesthetically outraged. And we as critics cannot be timorous, either intellectually or morally, in asserting the relevance of ethical considerations in evaluating Holocaust literature. Nor can we shy away from condemning those works which diminish and demean that historical event which they blithely incorporate into their aesthetic framework.

24. Levine, (20) disagrees here but he, perhaps, has less in mind, "... neither Freud nor Babi Yar is cheapened or exploited by the fictionalizing. . . .

Rav Kook's Doctrine of Teshuvah

LAWRENCE A. ENGLANDER

RABBI ABRAHAM ISAAC KOOK (1865-1935) WAS A man able to span the broad spectrum of Jewish outlooks of his day, from traditionalism to modernity. This ability was manifested in his efforts to find unity in matters practical as well as theoretical. As the first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Palestine, he ministered to the needs of the religious Jewish community, yet he also acknowledged an important role for the secularists in building the Jewish state and he actively encouraged cooperation and mutual understanding between these two groups. As a thinker, Rav Kook immersed himself in the esoteric traditions of the Kabbalah while at the same time keeping in tune with the universalist trends of the Enlightenment.

In his biography of Rav Kook, Jacob B. Agus¹ shows how this integrative approach was already developing during his subject's years as a student of Rabbi Naftali Berlin at the academy in Volozhin. In his more mature years, Kook crystallized this approach in his doctrine of Teshuvah. By examining this doctrine, we shall find ourselves arriving at a new understanding of the concept of Teshuvah as a key to unifying the individual and the cosmos.

Since Kook's treatment of the term is so distinctive, we shall leave "Teshuvah" untranslated rather than attempting to compress its meaning into a single English word. Although translations of his work, *Orot Hateshuvah*, have rendered the term as "repentance"² or "penitence,"³ neither of these words conveys the sense of return and reintegration which the author draws from the Hebrew. This point will be emphasized when we compare Kook's outlook with a phenomenological treatment of repentance/penitence presented by Evelyn Underhill, a Christian scholar whose studies in mysticism were contemporary with Kook's.⁴ Even though these two thinkers were probably not aware of each other's writings, a comparison of their works will serve to highlight certain unique features of Rav Kook's world-view.

Finally, we must keep in mind that Kook lived within a community

1. Jacob B. Agus, *High Priest of Rebirth* (New York: Bloch, 1972).

2. E.g., by A. Metzger, *Rabbi Kook's Philosophy of Repentance* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1968).

3. E.g., by B.Z. Bokser, *Abraham Isaac Kook* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

4. Underhill's work, *Mysticism*, was first published in 1911. Kook's *Orot Hateshuvah* was published in 1925, but much of its contents was gleaned from earlier writings.

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struggling for statehood — a struggle which he perceived as the dawning of the ultimate cosmic unification: the Messianic Age. We shall discuss how he applied his doctrine of Teshuvah to aspects of daily life during this period, which was ripe with promise for the Jewish people. Our inquiry begins with an examination of the doctrine of Teshuvah as it concerns the individual.

A. Teshuvah for the Individual

Although the universe is an integrated whole, writes Kook, the way in which we perceive it is often limited and fragmented.⁵ Random, purposeless actions fail to bring us into harmony with the spiritual core of all existence. Even the philosophical quest embraces only a part of the spiritual realm since it tends to divide reality in order to study it.⁶ The aim of the seeker of truth, then, is to apprehend the unity underlying all things and to integrate his own life with it.

Sin frustrates this process. Says Kook, "Every sin distresses the heart, since it disrupts the unity between the individual personality and all existence."⁷ As a result of sin, one may feel a general malaise, a state of being in which "God's light does not shine upon him."⁸ Since the individual is alienated from the Source of all life, he also feels fragmented within himself.

Teshuvah is a "returning" which restores one to a state of integration, both with God and within oneself. In Kook's own words, "Through Teshuvah everything returns to the divine."⁹ Teshuvah is

an effort to return to one's original status, to the source of life and higher being in their fullness, without limitation and diminution, in their highest spiritual character, as illumined by the simple, radiant divine light.¹⁰

This process begins through gentle self-criticism and an honest confrontation with one's character.¹¹ Then, with new humility, the individual can begin to rectify the "fragments" of his deeds.¹²

Teshuvah takes place gradually, and on different levels. At the very beginning of *Orot Hateshuvah*, Kook outlines their hierarchy. First is natu-

5. See *Orot Hateshuvah* 11:5. The citations from *Orot Hateshuvah* (henceforth referred to in the notes as *Or.T.*) rely upon the 1966 edition published by Merkaz Shapira of Jerusalem, in which several passages were added.

6. See *Orot Haqodesh* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1963) I, p. 11.

7. *Or.T.* 8:3. Translations are mine unless otherwise specified.

8. *Or.T.* chap. 3.

9. *Or.T.* 4:2.

10. *Or.T.* 12:9. Translation is Bokser's.

11. *Or.T.* 15:1.

12. *Or.T.* 14:5. It is interesting to note that Kook's word for "fragments" is *zizim*, a word found in Mishnah *Shabbat* 19:6 referring to the shreds of the foreskin. Just as these shreds stand in the way of proper circumcision, so do one's fragmented deeds stand in the way of perfect Teshuvah.

ral Teshuvah, which is subdivided into physical and spiritual; this level comprises transgressions against the laws of nature and morality. Second is religious Teshuvah, which is inspired by Torah and Jewish tradition. Above these — and including them — is rational Teshuvah, which is “inspired by a comprehensive outlook on life that came to crystallization after the natural and religious phases of Teshuvah had registered their influence.”¹³

It is with regard to the third level, that of rational Teshuvah, that Kook displays his greatest originality. Drawing from the rich storehouse of the Jewish mystical tradition, he depicts the process of Teshuvah as the infusion of divine light into the soul. We recall that sin engenders a state of alienation which blocks out divine light. Kook, the eternal optimist, suggests that this feeling of depression without cause is actually evidence of the light of God's Shekhinah stirring within the soul “in a highly condensed form.”¹⁴ This initial spark toward Teshuvah is nurtured by knowledge¹⁵ even though deeper awareness of one's incompleteness at first produces deeper anguish. As this anguish builds to an intensity almost beyond endurance so that it threatens to obstruct the creative sources of “thoughts, speech, prayer, outcry, feeling and poetry, then do all these ascend in a leap to reveal lights abounding with life from the source of silence.”¹⁶ Once this leap is taken, the soul experiences a “constant influx of the holy spirit.”¹⁷ Thus, the divine spark within the individual brings him, through Teshuvah, to bask in the radiance of divine light. With the aid of this light, one sees his imperfections more clearly and is able to correct them; this new state of consciousness brings great joy. “Teshuvah thereby brings about personal redemption.”¹⁸

Rav Kook demonstrates Teshuvah at work in another striking metaphor, taken from medicine. The discipline of physiology teaches that the human body, by nature, maintains a balance of health; should this balance — called homeostasis — be disturbed, the body takes measures to neutralize any threat to health:

The term “homeostasis” refers to the general level of functioning characteristic of the healthy organism, such as normal body temperature, a standard concentration of salt in the blood, and normal heart rate and blood pressure. Under stress the usual equilibrium is disturbed, and processes are set

13. *Or.T.* 1:3. Translation is Bokser's.

14. *Or.T.* 15:4.

15. Kook employs the term *binah* (“understanding”). In mystical literature, *binah* is the third Sefirah, denoting the ability to derive one thought from another. For Kook, this ability is the instrument of Teshuvah.

16. *Or.T.* 8:8. Translation is Metzger's. Bokser's translation reads, “then *one must* rise up in a leap to seek life-giving lights . . .” (emphasis mine). I prefer Metzger's rendering, since I believe that Kook's intention is to state that our creative abilities draw us toward God.

17. *Or.T.* 9:1. See also *Orot Haqodesh* I, p. 139.

18. *Or.T.* 15:9.

in motion to correct the disequilibrium and return the body to the normal level of functioning.¹⁹

It is the same with regard to the soul, suggests Kook:

It is the nature of the human soul to proceed upon an upright way. When a person strays from this way, and has fallen because of sin, if his soul is not as of yet completely corrupted, then this sense of uprightness pains his heart and causes him to waste away from great anguish, and he hastens to return (Heb. *lashuv*) so as to adjust that which is perverted until he senses that the sin is erased.²⁰

Teshuvah, for Kook, strives to maintain homeostasis of the soul. When this state is achieved, a healthy soul is integrated within a healthy body. Therefore, Teshuvah is the healthiest experience that a person can undergo.²¹

Employing this medical model, Kook describes the process of Teshuvah. Just as the organism releases antibodies to combat disease, so, when a person sins, Teshuvah releases its impulses into the soul; these impulses become manifest once remorse summons the soul to repent.²² At first, Teshuvah will cause pain while it severs evil sections from the self, similar to “the pain felt at the amputation of deteriorated limbs for purposes of healing.”²³ Although the ultimate effect of Teshuvah will be to restore the soul to health, the soul is initially left weakened by the experience, like a person who has been cured by a strong electric shock.²⁴ But once the fire of remorse has purged the evil from the self, this same fire purifies the soul and helps it to return to its state of moral and spiritual health.²⁵ Thus, Teshuvah comes to the soul like “healing from a master physician.”²⁶

B. *Cosmic Teshuvah: Tiqqun Olam*

Thus far we have been discussing the effects of Teshuvah upon the individual. But Rav Kook goes on to maintain that the drama of Teshuvah is played out in a much wider arena. Just as the individual soul strives to regain its equilibrium of spiritual health, so is there a “world soul” which “cries out like a fierce lioness in its anguish for complete rectification (Heb. *tiqqun*), for the ideal existence. We feel its pains and these purge us.”²⁷

19. Ernest R. Hilgard, Richard and Rita Atkinson, *Introduction to Psychology* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 34.

20. *Or.T.* chap. 1. Translation is Metzger's.

21. *Or.T.* 5:1.

22. *Or.T.* 6:2.

23. *Or.T.* 8:1.

24. *Or.T.* 9:4 and 9:10.

25. *Or.T.* 8:11 and 13:13.

26. *Or.T.* chap. 3.

27. *Or.T.* 4:1.

The Teshuvah of the individual, then, has cosmic significance in that it contributes toward *Tiqqun Olam*, the repair and unification of the universe. Even the thought of Teshuvah brings great benefit both to oneself and to the world.²⁸ When one raises his personal Teshuvah to the highest level, it becomes dedicated to the ideal of honoring God; this is the "larger light" of Teshuvah, which will shine most clearly at the dawn of the Messianic Age.²⁹

Paradoxically, however, Kook divides Teshuvah into a higher and a lower aspect: the higher aspect pertains to the individual, while the lower aspect is the one directed toward the world. The higher, individual aspect is motivated by thought, whereas action is more necessary for the lower aspect, since "the outer world does not grasp thought as it emanates from the divine realm and the logical process operating in full clarity. It is precisely by dulling thought that one can reach the world more readily."³⁰ However, both forms of Teshuvah must be pursued together, for

lower Teshuvah is like a body or vessel for the higher. . . . Even though extrinsically these two may appear contradictory, intrinsically they are like two companions that are inseparable.³¹

What Kook appears to be saying in this difficult passage is that an active life of moral deeds within the community is more efficacious than philosophical speculation in bringing the world to Teshuvah. However, even as the individual strives for social justice, so must he also strive for his own perfection on a higher plane, for the ultimate unification of the universe is contingent upon the integration of every individual human being.

We now begin to see the awesome task that Rav Kook has set before those who would pursue Teshuvah. Fortunately, though, the individual is not left completely to his own devices, for Kook offers two mediators in striving for *Tiqqun Olam*.

The first mediator is the *Zadik*, the righteous individual who not only feels personal remorse, but who also senses the anguish of the *Shekhinah* in its quest for perfection. When *Zadikim* perform Teshuvah,

the strategies they devise for themselves to rise out of depression and despair into the bright light of holiness and a nobler level of equity become in themselves great lights to illumine the world.³² (These righteous individuals seek not only their own Teshuvah, but they) perpetually long for the Teshuvah of the general community, and from the depths of their hearts they strive to exonerate the guilty as one who strives after life.³³

This yearning, however, is impeded by the "thick mire" of sin which covers the community and which defiles the *Zadik* when he comes into con-

28. *Or. T.* 7:6. See also *Orot Haqodesh I*, p. 88.

29. *Or. T.* 4:8.

30. *Or. T.* 16:12. Translation is Bokser's.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Or. T.* 8:6. Translation is Bokser's.

33. *Or. T.* 8:5.

tact with it. But his vision of the ultimate goal is so clear that he will endure these obstacles until they are overcome.³⁴ Through his persistence in performing Teshuvah, the *Zadiq* — and ultimately the Messiah — will elevate the community toward joy.³⁵ In this way the *Zadiq* acts as a catalyst for collective Teshuvah.

A second mediator in the drama of cosmic Teshuvah is the Jewish people. The very essence of this people's soul, writes Kook, is "the aspiration that the highest measure of justice, the justice of God, shall prevail in the world."³⁶ The first step in Teshuvah for the individual Jew is to link himself with the soul of his people.³⁷ This act is necessary not only for the sake of *Tiqqun Olam*, but also for the more immediate goal of the survival of the Jewish people.³⁸ Nor is ethnic identification in itself sufficient; rather, it is only through the intensification of Israel's religious faith that *Tiqqun Olam* will be achieved.³⁹ Rav Kook thereby assigns a cosmic role to the Jewish people in helping to bring about the redemption of the world:

The light of Teshuvah will be manifest first in Israel, and she will be the channel through which the life-giving force of the yearning for Teshuvah will reach the whole world, to illuminate it and to raise its stature.⁴⁰

Rav Kook presents, then, an integrative approach to the concept of Teshuvah. Acting as a catalyst, Teshuvah provokes the individual to acknowledge his fragmented existence and to make the transition from the disease of sin to moral and spiritual health, from anguish to joy. Through the mediation of righteous individuals and the collective soul of the Jewish people, the person's Teshuvah helps to achieve a rectification within his community and, ultimately, a cosmic return to God. Teshuvah, in both an individual and communal sense, creates the possibility for redemption.

C. Comparison with Underhill's Phenomenological View

In order for this redemption to come about, however, it is first necessary for us to acknowledge the gap which currently exists between the ideal and the real. In Kook's words:

It is rare to find an individual who pursues fully the revealed and the concealed together. . . . Such individuals are always weighed down by a heavy burden, by a troubled mind; nevertheless, they bring much good to the world. In the final analysis it is they who, by the fruits of their spirit, bring into being a new world, in which the heavenly and the earthly embrace each other.⁴¹

34. *Or. T.* 12:3.

35. *Or. T.* 14:8 and 4:5.

36. *Or. T.* 13:1. Translation is Bokser's.

37. *Or. T.* 13:3 and 4:7.

38. *Or. T.* 12:2.

39. *Or. T.* 15:11.

40. *Or. T.* 5:9. Translation is Bokser's.

41. *Orot Haqodesh* I, p. 37.

This "burden," as experienced by the repentant soul, is described eloquently by Evelyn Underhill. In her exposition of the worldview of the Christian mystic, she says that

by false desires and false thoughts man has built up for himself a false universe: as a mollusc, by the deliberate and persistent absorption of lime and rejection of all else, can build up for itself a hard shell which shuts it from the external world, and only represents in a distorted and unrecognizable form the ocean from which it was obtained. . . . A literal and deliberate getting out of the cave must be for every mystic, as it was for Plato's prisoners, the first step in the individual hunt for reality.⁴²

When the soul first awakens from its "sham life," it becomes aware of its limitations and yearns to bridge the gap between its finite state and infinite truth. Repentance is the means by which the soul begins this journey:

It is then that the outlook of rapture and awe receives the countersign of repentance. The harbinger of that new self which must be born appears under the aspect of a desire: a passionate longing to escape from the suddenly perceived hatefulness of selfhood, and to conform to Reality.⁴³

This "passionate longing" launches the individual upon the "Purgative Way," during which the mystic endures a variety of "fasting, solitude and mortification" in order to achieve "self-conquest"⁴⁴ over the body. The aim of repentance, for Underhill, is to negate the desires of the senses and to acknowledge oneself as part of "the All," to kill the old self in order that the new might come alive. This new self is one absorbed in the Infinite, one that surrenders to God the last vestiges of separate will in the "naughting of the soul."⁴⁵

From Christian history Underhill furnishes several exemplars of the Purgative Way: saints and mystics who denied themselves food and clothing, who embraced the three Christian virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience. To this phenomenon the term "penitence" might well apply, defined as "the undergoing of some discipline or exercise, voluntary or imposed by spiritual authority, in outward expression of repentance, and expiation of an offense."⁴⁶

Rav Kook's doctrine bears one interesting similarity to Underhill's world-view. In *Orot Haqodesh*, he draws the distinction between a holiness that destroys and a holiness that builds.

The benefits of the holiness that builds are visible, while the benefits of the one that destroys are hidden, because it destroys in order to build what is nobler than what has been built already.⁴⁷

42. E. Underhill, *Mysticism* (New York: Dutton, 1961), pp. 198-9.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 400.

46. *The Compact Edition of the Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 1971), s.v. "Penitence."

47. *Orot Haqodesh* II, p. 314. Translation is Bokser's.

Kook thus acknowledges that some aspects of present reality may be negated in order for a higher level of understanding to take their place.

Notwithstanding this apparent similarity, Kook and Underhill are worlds apart. Even their language is different. She is descriptive, writing about the experiences of others; he is prescriptive, writing on the basis of his own experience. Furthermore, their perspectives differ: where Underhill stresses mortification and self-denial, Kook cautions against excessive self-degradation and urges, instead, reflection and gentle self-criticism.⁴⁸ This is because, for him, the aim of Teshuvah is not to negate but to elevate. As Nathan Rotenstreich has observed regarding Kook,

The religious man is not required to forego anything; his task is to illumine everything in the light of the harmonious whole. . . . The world is as it is and it is only necessary that it be properly *understood*.⁴⁹

A metaphor serves to illustrate this difference. For Underhill, evil is like a covering of rust over the soul which blocks out the light of the sun; once this cover is destroyed, the light can shine through.⁵⁰ But Kook perceives evil in the world “as veils, which only facilitate the shining light, making it possible for the light to illumine the world, but they do not damage or destroy it.”⁵¹ In the grand scheme of *Tiqqun Olam*, even evil serves a purpose.

Another major factor which distinguishes Kook from Underhill is the scope which he attributes to the process of Teshuvah. To Underhill, repentance (or penitence) redeems the individual and only the individual. In her many chronicles of personal religious transformations, nowhere is there the suggestion that the experience of these individuals could be elevated to a communal or global level. She does state that a charismatic saint may become “the parent of a spiritual family,”⁵² but only as a model for other individuals to emulate. The cosmic significance of Teshuvah, for Kook, stems from his integrative approach to thought and deed.

D Personal Applications

During his lifetime, Rav Kook applied his teachings in his efforts to bring his people to collective Teshuvah. One problem to which he addressed his energies was the predicament of Jewish faith. In a letter to a colleague, he wrote:

Religious faith has declined, it continues to lose its vitality, because its ideological basis has been voided; no one studies it, no one seeks it.⁵³

48. *Or.T.* 14:22.

49. N. Rotenstreich, *Jewish Philosophy in Modern Times* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968), p. 223.

50. Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 202.

51. *Or.T.* 16:13. Translation is Bokser's.

52. Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 432.

53. Bokser, *Kook*, p. 355.

Rather than boldly addressing the issues of the day, Orthodox rabbinic authorities had retreated to concentrate on superficial nuances of the *halakhah*. Although much research was dedicated to obscure points of kabbalistic lore or to trivial interpretations of antiquated philosophy, the "soul of Torah" had been abandoned.⁵⁴

Rav Kook wished fervently to reclaim this soul. In terms of scholarly studies, he advised his own son to concentrate mainly on ethical and speculative works; "do not waste too much energy in studying *halakhic* material beyond what is necessary."⁵⁵ Exhorting fellow Jewish leaders to join this spiritual revival, he invoked once again his medical metaphor:

We are summoned to a mighty Teshuvah, a Teshuvah stirred by love in all its dimensions. It is precisely when the crisis is great and the peril immense that we must choose the best of therapies. We must be radical.⁵⁶

A second concern in pursuing communal Teshuvah was to mend the fractures within the Jewish people. Many of the *haluzim* who had come to rebuild the Land of Israel were secularist, atheistic Jews who were viewed with disdain by the religious leadership. Kook, however, felt that they played a valuable role within *klal yisrael*. Although he wrote that defection from religion was a great moral sickness caused by "an absorption in the vulgarity of materialistic existence,"⁵⁷ he also claimed that "the violence of atheism will cleanse away the dross that accumulated in the lower levels of religious faith"⁵⁸ so that the higher faith might emerge purified.

Kook was also confident that the secularists would be caught up in this wave of Teshuvah; but, he admonished, this would happen only if the religious community reached out to them in genuine affection. Just as the talmudic sage, Rabbi Meir, had pleaded before the heavenly tribunal on behalf of Rabbi Elisha ben Abuya who had become *Aher*, the apostate, in the same way

we shall purge the many Ahers in our midst in order to bring them to the life of the world to come, to mend their defects and to bring the best among them into the fellowship of life; not one among them shall be rejected.⁵⁹

The effort to accomplish this reconciliation was worthwhile, because the stakes were high: no *Tiqqun* would come to the world until it first came to the Jewish people.

Finally, "the reawakened desire of the people as a whole to return to its homeland, to its essence, to its spirit and character — there is truly the light of Teshuvah in this."⁶⁰ Kook saw the rebuilding of the Land of Israel

54. Ibid., pp. 349, 354.

55. Ibid., p. 329.

56. Ibid., p. 355.

57. *Or.T.* 6:4. Translation is Bokser's.

58. *Orot* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1963), p. 127. Translation is Bokser's, in *Kook*, p. 265.

59. Bokser, *Kook*, p. 340.

60. *Or.T.* 17:2.

as the culmination of the above two measures of communal Teshuvah, and as the dawning of *Tiqqun Olam* and the Messianic Age. The first step, he counselled, was to develop a sense of national self-esteem and mutual love; once this step was achieved, knowledge would banish ignorance and fulfilled life upon the sacred soil would be Israel's portion.⁶¹ From that spot, redemption would radiate out to all the world.

E. Conclusion

Rav Kook's doctrine of Teshuvah, as we have seen, is well-steeped within Jewish tradition. Rabbinic Judaism has taught that sincere Teshuvah is redemptive,⁶² and that its ramifications extend far beyond the individual. Kook's main contribution is twofold. First, his understanding of contemporary society and modern post-Enlightenment thought enabled him to identify the Teshuvah that would carry Judaism — and the Jewish people — into the future. Second, through his personal righteous conduct and his genuine love for his people, Rav Kook became a model for his own teaching.

61. "Teshuvah and Peace," in *Or.T.*, p. 136.

62. See, e.g., *Deut. Rabbah* 2:23.

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“Juif ou Israélite?” *The Old Jewish Question in Contemporary France*

JUDITH FRIEDLANDER

Introduction

IN DECEMBER OF 1978, ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER came to Europe to receive the Nobel Prize. After Stockholm, he stopped in Paris and appeared on Bernard Pivot's *Apostrophes*, the popular television talk show which brings authors together to discuss their latest works. Pivot entitled his program that week *Sources et Racines*¹ and, along with the Yiddish writer, he invited Pierre Gougaud, an elderly gentleman who had just published his first novel — this in his native Occitan² — and Jean Orieux, another author of fiction, who wrote in the dialect of the Limousin. What better way to acknowledge the diversity of traditions in France and challenge Jacobin policies of cultural hegemony than to have these regional writers share in the glory of Singer's achievement?

The evening was, however, an embarrassing failure, cluttered with inadequate gestures, insensitive to the ironies of history — “A great year for Poland, wasn't it?” Pivot remarked, “You and the Pope!” — still, it made an important statement by insisting on the connection between the Nobel Prize laureate and these minority writers, suggesting, albeit clumsily, that people look more closely at Singer's Poland as they fight for the rights of minority cultures in France. Pivot's program, undoubtedly by chance, actually promoted the strategy of the Cercle Gaston Crémieux,³ a group of Jewish intellectuals who have worked closely with the French Socialist Party to help draw up a minorities platform. The Cercle was founded in 1967 by Richard Marienstras, a professor of English literature and civilization at the University of Paris VII, and its members believe that Jews and other minorities in France should collectively demand their cultural rights. The group models itself on early twentieth century social democrats, Jews and Gentiles from Austria-Hungary and Russia-Poland, whose proposals for cultural autonomy influenced the thinking of writers and intellectuals in the Warsaw which Singer knew.

1. The show (“Sources and Roots”) was broadcast on Friday evening, December 15, 1978.

2. Occitan, also known as the Langue d'Oc or Provençal, is spoken in southern France.

3. Gaston Crémieux, a socialist and a Communard, was killed during the Paris Commune in 1871. He was the brother of the better known Adolphe Crémieux, who obtained French citizenship for Algerian Jews.

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The Cercle Gaston Crémieux is not alone in having borrowed its vision from Central and Eastern Europe. So has Yvon Bourdet, the socialist intellectual whose work on the rights of the Occitans has been inspired by thinkers like Otto Bauer.⁴ Others may be less clear about the historical links tying minority nationalism in contemporary France to earlier movements elsewhere in Europe, but many of the debates occurring today echo a different time and place. Establishing the relationship is important, I suggest, particularly for those interested in the case of the Jews.

In recent years, much of the literature concerned with French Jews has pointed to a dramatic rise in ethnic pride. After generations of trying to become *Israélites* (Frenchmen of the faith of Moses), many Jews are presently resisting their country's assimilationist policies and insisting that they be allowed to be *Juifs*.⁵ According to this line of argument, Jews and other minority groups are finally rebelling against late eighteenth century ideals about the value of accepting a single culture to the exclusion of other traditions. Minority nationalism, we are told, stands in opposition to French assimilationism. Yet, when it comes to the concept of culture, are the two really so different?

By concentrating on the distinction between assimilationism and minority nationalism, we miss the true point of conflict. Instead, we should look at the processes involved in creating national cultures and evaluate the difficulties that the very idea has caused for Jews both in France and further East. European national cultures are, virtually by definition, assimilationist visions. Be they *Israélites* or *Juifs*, most Jews who have claimed for themselves a national identity have developed their cultures according to rules established by the universalistic values of the Enlightenment. Sometimes transformed by socialism, sometimes simply adapted to modern bourgeois capitalism, these national cultures have demanded major changes in the traditional meaning of what it is to be a Jew.

As paradoxical as it might appear, Jews joined national movements in Central and Eastern Europe for reasons similar to those of the Jews who assimilated in France. Influenced by the Enlightenment and the principles of the French Revolution, Jews in the East, like Jews in the West, came to express their political aspirations through national cultures. Today, we have come full circle: some Jews in France are developing their national identity through Polish Jewish interpretations of Western European cultural models.

4. Yvon Bourdet, *L'Eloge du patois ou l'itinéraire d'un occitan* (Paris: Galilée, 1977).

5. See Dominique Schnapper, *Juifs et israélites* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980) and William Safran, "France and her Jews: From 'Culte Israelite' to 'Lobby Juif,'" *The Toqueville Review*, V, No. 1, (Spring-Summer, 1983): 101-135.

Nationalism and National Cultures

While we can trace the idea of a nation back at least as far as medieval times,⁶ we usually date nationalism and the nation-state, in the modern sense of the terms, to the second half of the eighteenth century. Its first great manifestation, Western historians agree, is the French Revolution.⁷ Modern nationalism developed along with the rise of popular sovereignty, the secularization of society and the spread of industrialization. It depends, what is more, on arousing what Edward Shils has called the "primordial attachments" of a people: the sense of being of the same race, speaking the same language, sharing the same customs and territory.⁸ Nationalism also implies the nation-state and the existence of the nation-state usually strengthens the feeling of nationalism.⁹

The nation-state was a Western European invention. Not until the middle of the nineteenth century was it generally assumed that the two terms went together so simply. Starting, perhaps, with Rousseau, progressive philosophes in the West expressed the belief that the state could best gain the support of the masses by helping the people identify their cultural and emotional life with the polity. Instead of ruling over dominions made up of peoples — nations — who spoke different languages and had separate cultures, the modern state was to be comprised of just one nation. The accepted ideal had become one nation within one state.

At the time of the French Revolution, those progressives who sought ways of extending political rights to all peoples living in France, assumed the wisdom of establishing a single national political culture. Before legislating that all men were created equal, they developed the structures whereby all people could become equal. The famous declaration by Count Stanislas Clermont-Tonnere in defense of the Jews was a clear expression of this position:

We must refuse the Jews everything as a nation and give them everything as individuals; they must constitute neither a political group nor an order within the state; they must become citizens as individuals.¹⁰

In exchange for their collective identity, Jews would gain freedom as individuals, including the right to practice the religion of their choice. Jews would be Frenchmen who happened to go to a Jewish house of prayer. As Frenchmen of the faith of Moses, they would be culturally like every other citizen, sharing the values espoused by the state. If they

6. Arnold Toynbee, *A World After the Peace Conference: Being an Epilogue to the History of the Peace Conference in Paris and a Prologue to the Survey of International Affairs 1920-1923* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), pp. 4-5.

7. Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1956), p. 3.

8. Edward Shils, "Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties," *British Journal of Sociology*, VIII (1957): 130-146.

9. Kohn, *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

10. Cited in Léon Poliakov, *Histoire de l'antisémitisme: de Voltaire à Wagner*, Volume III (Paris: Calmann-Lévy), p. 234, fn 2.

remained members of the Jewish nation, progressives believed, they would have different loyalties and, consequently, be a threat to the state.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, enlightened Jews in France and Germany understood the limitations of this emancipation, but they accepted the terms. People like the German Moses Mendelssohn even helped prepare Jews to embrace the traditions of their homelands. They agreed to compromise, sacrificing the cultural autonomy of the whole in order to gain political freedom for individuals. While Jewish communities across France and Germany varied considerably — culturally, socio-economically and politically — some favoring emancipation and others vigorously opposing it,¹¹ the French Revolution gave Jews little choice if they wished to remain in France. Emancipation was thrust upon them.

The story of the Enlightenment moving East in the early nineteenth century is well known. It brought with it a similar trend towards assimilation, usually into Russian culture, but sometimes into German and Polish as well. Secular education was favored as Jews awaited their emancipation. Then, by the mid-1800s, with the dramatic wave of nationalism sweeping across Europe, on the one hand, and the slight easing of anti-Semitism on the other, the enlightened Jews of the East divided essentially into two major groups: European assimilationists and Hebrew nationalists. Following the Western European model, the assimilationists sought to reduce the role of religion, so that the observance of Judaism might parallel Christian practices and no longer require Jews to live a completely different way of life. The Hebrew nationalists, on the other hand, at this early period, stimulated the development of a modern secular Hebrew literature, posing yet another serious threat to the traditional Jewish communities there. While many nationalists remained committed to Judaism, they still insisted on the importance of developing a modern Hebrew culture and led the way towards secularizing the notion of being a Jew. By the end of the century, Hebrew nationalism had become Zionism and a second Jewish nationalist movement had emerged as well: the socialist Bund, a group committed to developing a working class Yiddish culture in the Diaspora.

It is easy to see how Jews underwent major changes in order to accommodate French, German, or Russian national traditions, but the process is less clear when we turn to Jewish movements. Still, a look at both Zionist and Bundist visions of Jewish culture, with the singular exceptions of those few spiritual Zionists, like Aḥad Ha'am, suggests that they, too, had embraced Western European values. The Bundists and other social democratic national movements, it is true, opposed territorial nationalism and supported the idea of a multi-national state, but they continued to see the political importance of creating a national culture.

11. Poliakov, *Op. cit.*, p. 235.

In an article devoted to Rousseau and Herder, F.M. Barnard concludes that culture

emerges as something not only potentially relevant to politics, but something indispensably necessary. . . . It is precisely the infusion of the political with cultural content which characterizes modern nationalism. [From this perspective, nationalism] is unthinkable without appeal to some cultural values. But for this change to come about, for culture to be invoked in the making of political claims, culture itself must first be viewed in its political contexts. . . . Not only politics, but culture too undergoes drastic change in the propagation of nationalist doctrine.¹²

The change is not arbitrary, but follows a set of "universal" standards established by French and, later, German definitions of what constitutes a *bona fide* national culture.

Contemporary France

"To attack the language and culture of a people, is to inflict the deepest of wounds. We proclaim the right to difference," announced François Mitterrand during a campaign speech in March, 1981.¹³ While it is doubtful that he will be successful in supporting and developing minority cultures in France, his Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, has created a National Commission of French Cultures and has been seriously considering proposals for cultural decentralization. In February, 1982, Lang received a lengthy report entitled, "*Démocratie culturelle et droit à la différence*." Its author, Henri Giordan, a researcher at the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), frequently participates in activities sponsored by the Cercle Gaston Crémieux. The report to the Ministry represents the position of the Cercle: cultural autonomy in a multi-national state.

Combining the ideas of Bundists and Austrian-Hungarian Marxists with the material realities of present-day France, Giordan's report goes beyond the purely regional plan for cultural autonomy. With the exception, perhaps, of Corsica, regional nationalism would not solve the problems facing minorities in France, he maintains, because:

- 1) Regions are no longer homogeneous.
- 2) Minority peoples do not necessarily live in the regions of origin.
- 3) There are non-territorial minorities living in France whose rights should also be respected.¹⁴

12. F.M. Barnard, "National Culture and Political Legitimacy: Herder and Rousseau," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XLIV, No. 2 (April-June, 1983): 251.

13. Cited in Henri Giordan, *Démocratie culturelle et droit à la différence: Rapport au ministre de la culture* (Paris: La Documentation française, 1982), p. 7.

14. When the Cercle Gaston Crémieux debates these issues, it usually invites representatives of the Armenian movement, together with those of the Breton and Occitan movements, to help support the position of Diaspora minorities. At such gatherings, Giordan provides the over-view. There was such an event at the Centre Rachi in June, 1979 and another one in November, 1982. The latter has been reported in the Cercle's journal: *Combat pour la diaspora*, No. 11-12 (1983).

Briefly, Giordan argues that the historical idea of building a democracy in France through the diffusion of one dominant, "legitimate" culture, can no longer defend itself against external and internal pressures. First of all, the national market has been replaced by an international one which continuously introduces foreign cultural goods, thereby threatening the hegemony of French culture. Secondly, the republican idea of cultural unity has fallen victim to the ever-growing demands of minorities to express themselves culturally, demands that have been gaining supporters over the last twenty years.

How should France respond? With a huge cultural project in which the state formally recognizes the cultural autonomy of its minorities:

. . . every community of citizens, wherever it may be, must have the right to organize an autonomous cultural life.¹⁵

Giordan lays out a plan for the promotion of minority histories, languages and cultures, including the organization of research projects of an ethnographic and linguistic nature and the formation of programs to sponsor minority literatures, theaters, music and the "plastic arts." Together with proposals for teaching in minority languages, Giordan's report suggests that the French government subsidize the cultural autonomy of its recognized minorities in terms similar to those proposed by social democrats earlier in this century.

Committed to the perpetuation of Jewish cultures in the Diaspora, Marienstras, following Giordan's plan, together with other members of the Cercle, have encouraged Jews to seek their cultural autonomy in a joint political effort with other minorities. Many in the Jewish community, however, have had mixed feelings about supporting the initiative of the Cercle, in part because the group has frequently criticized Israel, and has opposed the French Jewish Establishment, as well as organized religion. While Marienstras, through Giordan, may have influenced the Socialist Party, his group does not speak for many Jews in France. Nevertheless, thanks to Mitterrand's government, the vision of the Cercle, even without the official backing of its constituency, might gain greater acceptance among the many Jews in France who are trying to redefine their Jewish identity. Even if the Cercle fails, it has raised some of the most basic questions confronting French Jews today.

While the Cercle recognizes the importance of the State of Israel in the life of contemporary Jewry, it does not "share the ideology of the centrality of Israel."¹⁶ Deeply opposed to cultural uniformity and to the expansionist policies of all nation-states, the Cercle often takes issue with the policies of Israel and criticizes the tendency of the French Jewish Establishment to rubber-stamp actions taken by the "Jewish" state. As far

15. Giordan, *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

16. Bernard Chaouat et Claudine Guittonneau, "Positions," *Combat pour la diaspora*, No. 11-12 (1983): 185.

as traditional Judaism is concerned, once again the Cercle keeps its distance, insisting on the importance of developing mechanisms to support the secular and political life of the Jewish collectivity outside of the religion. This the Cercle has tried to do by sponsoring study groups in Jewish history, giving classes in Yiddish and in Jewish cooking, and by organizing workshops to discuss how to have a meaningful secular Jewish culture in France today. Most important, it has been a leading force in encouraging events that promote Diaspora Jewry. There is no one Jewish culture, the Cercle argues, and although it sponsors projects only on Eastern European Jews, it supports the efforts of others who promote Ladino, Judeo-Arabic and even Hebrew cultures in the Diaspora. Identifying itself neither with the State of Israel nor with the Jewish religion, the Cercle wants to create living Jewish cultures in France that go beyond Israeli nationalism and Western European "cultism" — beyond the politics of such Establishment organizations as the CRIF (*Conseil représentatif des Institutions Juives de France*) and the Judaism defined by the Consistoire, the assembly of rabbis instituted by Napoleon.

Among those born before the Second World War, there are critics of Marienstras who have difficulty accepting the possibility of establishing a secular Jewish tradition outside of a nation-state. In spite of the platforms developed earlier this century, they do not believe that cultural nationalism can survive without a political territory. After the horrors of World War II, even former Bundists have become staunch Zionists. Furthermore, the large and very vocal population of North African Jews now living in France also generally supports the Zionist point of view.

Albert Memmi, born in Tunisia, has addressed the national problem directly in his second book on the Jewish question, *La Libération du juif*.¹⁷ For the Jew who has rejected traditional Judaism, there is nothing but the negative emptiness, described first by Jean-Paul Sartre, that is imposed on the Jew by the non-Jew.¹⁸ In order to live one's Jewishness positively, the Jew must reside in a Jewish nation-state. Now that Israel exists, a Jew interested in assuming his Jewish identity — and for Memmi a secular identity is all that makes sense in the modern world — has only one realistic choice: move to Israel.

Memmi comes from a religious Jewish home in Tunis; Marienstras from a secular one in Warsaw. One was drawn to the prestige and attraction of French culture, the other to the memory of a lost, but vital Jewish national one. In an article challenging Memmi's *La Libération du juif*, Marienstras reminds us that a Jewish national culture thrived in Poland between the two wars. By 1937 there were twenty-seven daily newspapers

17. Albert Memmi, *La Libération du juif* (Paris: Payot, 1966).

18. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. G. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1948).

in Yiddish, one hundred weeklies and eighty-five monthlies.¹⁹ Even though he might have included the statistics for papers published in Hebrew or the Jewish ones written in Polish and even though he might have mentioned the large number of Jews living in Poland at that time who did not identify themselves culturally as Jews, the Yiddish figures he cites are still impressive.

Taking the analysis of the Russian Jewish historian, Simon Dubnow,²⁰ Marienstras argues that Jews have been most creative throughout history when they lived and interacted with those around them, not when they closed in on themselves. Whether we look at the Golden Age in Spain, the Enlightenment in Germany or the *Haskalah* in Russia, Jewish culture has been most brilliant when reaching out to others. Jews need to maintain their cultural autonomy, Marienstras says, but they should not cut themselves off in national or religious ghettos.

While the argument is compelling, many Jewish intellectuals who were born after the Second World War see the problem differently. Be they Ashkenazi or Sephardi Jews, they have no experience with national Jewish cultures in multi-national states. Some are critical of Israel and the political/cultural policies of all nation-states, while others are not, but many in this generation challenge the logic of wanting to create a secular Jewish culture in France. Unlike Memmi, whose similar position led him to conclude that the only solution for those wishing to be Jewish-identified was to move to Israel, the young have turned to religion and Jewish philosophy, instead.

The Cercle Gaston Crémieux was the battlefield of this split between Jewish secularism and Judaism. In 1977, a group of university students invited a Moroccan rabbi from a yeshiva in Strasbourg to give a lecture at the Cercle. Their initiative broke the unwritten rule that religious leaders not be sponsored by the group, for they have other forums in which to speak. Soon after the incident, those responsible for arranging the talk left the Cercle and some of them have subsequently become practicing Jews.

Perhaps the most eloquent statement of the post-World War II generation is Alain Finkielkraut's *Le Juif imaginaire*. His target is not the Cercle Gaston Crémieux — in fact, he praises Richard Marienstras in a footnote²¹ — but the emptiness today of his own secular Polish Jewish heritage, a way of life which had been monstrously destroyed before he was born. Not having suffered personally during the war, nor having shared in the traditions, secular or religious, of Poland or France, his Jew-

19. Richard Marienstras, "Albert Memmi et 'la libération du juif,'" *Les Nouveaux Cahiers* (September, 1966) and republished in Richard Marienstras, *Etre un peuple en diaspora* (Paris: François Maspéro, 1975), p. 154.

20. Simon Dubnow, *Jewish History: An Essay in the Philosophy of History*, trans. I. Friedlander (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1927).

21. Alain Finkielkraut, *Le juif imaginaire* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1980), p. 51.

ishness in his youth, he claims, was nothing more than a political travesty, a number that he drew on when it was convenient, his most interesting way of attracting attention. There was no substance to his “*juiif*,” it was little more than a narcissistic label. While Finkelkraut has no intention of entering a yeshiva or of making a commitment to a traditional Jewish way of life, he has become a serious student of Jewish history and philosophy, and is very much part of the movement of those who are making a return, a *teshuvah*.

For many Jews born after the war, their *teshuvah* remains critical of Establishment Judaism and Western democratic culture. According to Shmuel Trigano, a major spokesman against both secular Judaism and recognized Orthodoxy,

The dialogue between the State and the Synagogue is a monologue in two voices; it is the modern West and it says only one thing: it forbids the Jewish people from being the Jewish people. That is why secularism and secular culture, like Orthodoxy and its “religious” discourse have no authenticity for the people. They are both arms for destruction.²²

Reviewing the history of the French Republic and the Jews, Trigano tries to show how secular nationalism, even Jewish secular nationalism, has been antithetical to Judaism, claiming that, at best, it has transformed what had been a way of life into a Western religion. He calls for a return to the Torah outside of the Synagogue. A Sephardi Jew who insists on drawing out the Middle Eastern roots of Judaism, Trigano condemns Israel along with European/American Jewry for duplicating the values of a Western nation-state. For years he has been active in promoting Sephardi culture and has spoken out forcefully against the racism of the European-style Israeli State.²³ For him, true Zionism has yet to come. Trigano does not recommend minority status in Europe for the Jews, as they have been colonized there already for centuries, but looks to the day when the Jewish people will acquire the “State of Moses,” not the “State of Caesar.” In the meantime, Jews should retrieve the Torah from the hands of the Synagogue and revive themselves culturally.²⁴ More rhetorical than pragmatic, Trigano provides no true plan of action for the “re-orientalization” of the Jews.

Conclusion

In spite of Trigano, many post-World War II Jews are joining Orthodox religious movements, but, significantly, these are marginal groups, even if they remain within the European tradition of Judaism. Sephardim are becoming Hasidim! Others, perhaps more to Trigano’s liking,

22. Shmuel Trigano, *La République et les juifs* (Paris: Les Presses d’aujourd’hui, 1982), p. 253 (my translation).

23. Shmuel Trigano, ed. *Le Second Israel*, Special issue of *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 394 bis. (1979).

24. Shmuel Trigano, *La République et les juifs*, p. 255 ff.

are participating in Orthodox groups run by Sephardi religious leaders. This tendency, while not statistically important, is still worthy of comment, because many of the new members come from non-observant homes and explain their conversion as a reaction against the emptiness of a secular Jewish identity in the Diaspora.

While there is still strong support for Zionism in France, few hold on to the idea of national autonomy in the Diaspora. Only in a Jewish nation-state do they see Jews as having been successful in developing a vital national culture. Marienstras and others may have written about the considerable accomplishments of Jewish cultural traditions in Central and Eastern Europe, but the outcome there has not been encouraging.

An important aspect of the problem has been lost in this description of French Jews. With the exception of Trigano, nobody has questioned how national cultures might have transformed Judaism in incompatible ways. If the right to difference created the necessary conditions in France for Jews to try once again to develop national cultures in the Diaspora, would the new efforts be anything more than a duplication of French culture in Yiddish, Ladino, Hebrew or Judeo-Arabic? Probably not, particularly if those involved patterned themselves on the national cultures of Jews in Poland between the two wars or the still dominant ideals in Israel today.

Many French Jews who were born after the Second World War seem to recognize the contradictions in the dreams for national autonomy. Their *teshuvah* is less a cry of despair against the tragedy of the War than a challenge to European assimilationism. Explicitly or not, many are critical of the compromises Jews made with Europe, as they determined their own national cultures or worshipped in synagogues endorsed by the State.

France — An Unexpected Center for Jewish Life

Review-Essay by FRANCES MALINO

The Bargain and the Bridle: the General Union of the Israelites of France, 1941-1944. By CYNTHIA J. HAFT. Chicago. Dialog Press, 1983.

The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962. By MICHAEL M. LASKIER, Albany. The State University of New York Press, 1983.

Jewish Identities in France: An Analysis of Contemporary French Jewry. By DOMINIQUE SCHNAPPER, translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Chicago. University of Chicago Press, 1983.

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS IN MODERN FRANCE has often offered surprises (not always pleasant) and has always served as a barometer to evaluate the successes and failures of emancipation. Yet the realities of a highly centralized Jacobin state and a tradition of — some might say necessity for — acculturation and assimilation have prevailed throughout. They may continue to prevail. At present, however, the French Jewish community displays a vitality and heterogeneity unanticipated in the aftermath of World War II and rarely paralleled in its long and rich past.

On one level, the explanation for this change is quite simple. Three major events have left an indelible mark on French Jewish life. North African immigration, numbering close to 250,000, has profoundly altered the demographic composition and ideological orientation of the community, which was further transformed by the emergence of the State of Israel and the events surrounding the Six-Day War of 1967. The painful reality of Vichy's often enthusiastic collaboration in the deportation of close to one quarter of the Jewish population has remained powerful throughout.

Yet, to isolate the causes is hardly sufficient. Only an investigation of the impact of the Holocaust, the largely unexplored past of the Jews of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, and the complexities of the relation of France and its Jews to the State of Israel can begin to permit a full appre-

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ciation of the changing dimensions of the French Jewish community. The history of the Jews of France must provide the foundation. Happily, the last decade has seen the emergence of a diverse and highly sophisticated literature. Paula Hyman's *From Dreyfus to Vichy: the Remaking of French Jewry, 1906-1939* and David Weinberg's *A Community on Trial*, for example, have shown how variegated was the pre-War Jewish community. Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton's *Vichy France and the Jews*, in drawing on archival resources of immense richness, has graphically portrayed the stark and brutal realities of the war years. And additional works have recently appeared, each highlighting in yet another way the contemporary portrait of the largest Jewish community in Western Europe.

In titling her work *The Bargain and the Bridle*, Cynthia J. Haft alerts the reader to the lesson behind her detailed discussion of the creation and functioning of the UGIF (General Union of the Israelites of France), the central organization imposed upon French Jewry by the Nazis. However attractive a bargain with the enemy might be, she writes, the bridle remains as part of the agreement. As, indeed, it did. From its creation in 1941, ostensibly as a central welfare organization to replace the numerous dissolved Jewish agencies, the UGIF was caught between the real assistance that it provided to the Jews and the equally compelling manipulation by, and ultimate cooperation with, the Germans.

Ms. Haft's style is eloquent and concise. She describes the role of the UGIF in the German-occupied North as well as in the Vichy-controlled South of France, explains the means by which it implemented German policy and portrays in detail its leadership, publications and personnel. We learn, as well, of the divisions within the native French Jewish establishment and the distinctions made all too easily by the autochthonous Jews between themselves and their foreign born coreligionists. We also encounter yet one more time the nightmarish juxtaposition of a seemingly normal institution functioning with a set of goals too inhuman for its bureaucracy fully to comprehend.

The story is certainly not unique to France. Ms. Haft acknowledges, moreover, that the Jewish Council of France was less significant than the Judenrät of other Western European countries and certainly than those of the ghettos of the East. An evaluation of how the UGIF affected the destiny of the Jews in France remains, however, Ms. Haft's primary intention and her conclusions permeate the whole of the book. In an early chapter, she assures the reader that she seeks neither to evaluate nor to castigate the individuals involved. On an institutional level, however (can we really make this kind of separation?), she finds the UGIF guilty of contributing to Nazi propaganda by reassuring the Jews, in its *Bulletin*, that their relatives who had been sent to the East were alive and well. The UGIF is also held responsible for failing to warn the Jews of France of imminent deportations and for sacrificing "foreign" Jews in the hope of

saving French Jews and French Jews in the hope of saving a select elite, including the UGIF leadership. Lastly, by its “fraudulent” and “perverse” appearance of power, the UGIF altered the destiny of its coreligionists by precluding any form of mass resistance.

Ms. Haft’s case is a powerful one. In order to have history serve as a warning, however, she has sacrificed some of its complexity. Vichy’s own defense of its position — that it sacrificed foreign Jews to save its own, for example — is accepted uncritically, yet as Marrus and Paxton have demonstrated, it is historically indefensible. The UGIF, on the other hand, functioned with a trust and a legalism consistent with France’s past if not her present. Ignorance of the ultimate goals of the Nazis, moreover, was real and resistance was perhaps more frequent than is acknowledged. Although Ms. Haft reports that the leaders rejected the “missionary project,” namely the encouraging of Jews to join their family members at Drancy, the concentration site north of Paris, she underestimates the attempt to seek help from the political arm of Vichy and ignores the possible explanation that the subsequent deportation of the vanguard of the UGIF was the result.¹ Resistance, however misdirected and ineffectual, did, in fact, threaten the existence of the entire welfare apparatus.

Therein, of course, lies the essence of the dilemma and perhaps also a somewhat less than one-sided judgment of the UGIF.

The Holocaust appears almost not all in Michael Laskier’s work and rightly so, since the communities of Morocco experienced few of the atrocities of the war. What they suffered as Jews, however, were the inequities endemic in a country ruled by Moslem law and shielded from technological and intellectual development. They subsequently suffered as well from the awkwardness of aspiring to French citizenship and thereby exacerbating the fragility of their status.

Laskier begins his story with a brief description of the Jewish communities in Morocco prior to the establishment, in 1862, of the first of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) schools. The surprising diversity of the Jews (Judeo-Spaniards, Judeo-Arabs, Judeo-Berbers) as well as their dispersion throughout the country forms the background for a detailed investigation and evaluation of the educational, cultural, social, and political activities of the AIU from the pre-colonial period through the independence of Morocco in 1956. A short discussion of the *Ittihād Maroc*, the recently (1961-1962) Arabized name for the Alliance, concludes this monograph. Throughout, Laskier has interspersed photographs of Moroccan Jews as well as of the Alliance leadership and a multitude of informative and illustrative tables.

1. Suggested by Yerachmiel (Richard) Cohen in a paper delivered at Brandeis University and soon to be published in F. Malino and B. Wasserstein (eds.), *The Jews of Modern France* (University Press of New England).

Although the French penetrated Algeria in 1830 and established a protectorate over Tunisia in 1881, it was not until March 30, 1912 that they established their protectorate over Morocco. Northern Morocco, Tangier excluded, became a Spanish zone on November 27, 1912. The pre-protectorate era found the Alliance struggling to afford temporary relief to the Jews, extending an educational network to most of the towns in the north, south, interior and coastal areas in the west, delicately balancing the secular and the sacred (there was much opposition from the rabbis and community leaders), and relying exclusively on fundraising for its existence. Although its schools prepared a generation of Jews to enter French commerce and business, collaboration with the French was not synonymous with intentionally facilitating French colonial penetration. Throughout this period there emerges the extraordinary dedication of the Alliance personnel.

A bargain and a bridle of a very different sort awaited the AIU during the years of the protectorate. The French agreed to provide the Alliance with annual subsidies dependent upon the number of youths enrolled in its schools and to assist in constructing or leasing school buildings. The activities of the AIU were thus legitimized and its financial concerns minimized. The bridle, however, appears in the explanation for French support. Laskier concludes that in offering the Jews a modern French education without total Europeanization, the AIU, contrary to its own commitments, facilitated a maintenance of the status quo consistent with France's determination to refuse citizenship to the French Jews. In contrast to the 1870 Crémieux decree, which collectively naturalized Algerian Jews, only a small minority of Moroccan Jews obtained French citizenship. Ironically and inexplicably (no time? fear of unrest?), this lack of citizenship did not prevent the Vichy government from continuing the subsidies to the Alliance schools until the American landing in North Africa in November 1942.

The protectorate years witnessed conflicts between the AIU and the Zionists, with the former refusing to acknowledge the potential strength of the Jewish nationalists and the latter accusing the AIU of sacrificing Jewish interests in favor of those of France. The end of the war, the emergence of Israel and the independence of Morocco led not only to the involvement of American and international Jewish organizations but also to an end to these conflicts. As Laskier reveals, all educational initiatives of the post-1945 period were meant to prepare the Jews for emigration.

The Alliance, or, rather, the *Ittihād Maroc*, continues to function. Supported by the JDC as well as by the Moroccan government, 2,100 students were enrolled in its schools in 1980. Despite the relative security of the remaining Jews (about 60,000 from approximately 240,000), Laskier acknowledges that Moroccan Jewry is slowly moving towards liquidation.

The major contributions of the AIU during its century of involvement in Morocco clearly lay in combatting illiteracy, creating community

leaders and providing secondary and vocational training. If any accusation ought to be directed against it, Laskier concludes, it is that of not devoting sufficient time to Jewish subjects and to Hebrew, at least partly because of French pressure and the nature of the financial support.

Laskier has provided us with a comprehensive and informative account. He does not, however, relate the subject sufficiently to the broader issues of government during the protectorate, as he promises in his Introduction. One would have liked, for example, a more complete discussion of the relations between the *Quai d'Orsay* and the AIU. The reader would have benefitted, moreover, from a set of maps as well as a glossary of terms. Also, Laskier might have made better use of a copy editor. Grammatical mistakes, spelling errors and a certain roughness of style interfere at times with the reading and appreciation of the work.

The AIU may have neglected Jewish studies and Hebrew in a need to satisfy French authorities and transform the Jews of Morocco into French partisans. North African Jews, for their part, however, retained a profound attachment and commitment to Jewish practices and traditions. As they emigrated to France they quite naturally formed the majority of what Dominique Schnapper calls practicing Jews. In a provocative sociological study based on ninety interviews with Jews of different backgrounds (both the list of interviews and questions are in the appendices), Ms. Schnapper has constructed a typology of Jewish identification and behavior. *Jewish Identities in France* consists of both an analysis and demonstration, through extensive citations, of practicing, militant and assimilated Jews.

Although practicing Jews, as Ms. Schnapper acknowledges, account for only a minority of French Jewry and are often described in less than happy terms by their coreligionists, they alone experience Judaism in all its dimensions. They are also — especially the “newly practicing” among them — the most fascinating to Ms. Schnapper. They, more than any other French Jews, challenge the nature of the evolution of French Judaism and the cultural centralism of modern France. Militant Judaism, however, predominates among the Jews of France. Primarily of Ashkenazic origin and generally part of the upper strata of society, militant Jews differ from non-Jews only in their political activities on behalf of the state of Israel. Unlike the practicing Sephardic Jews, the North Africans, for whom emigration to Israel represents a return to the Promised Land, these Jews have no intention of making *aliyah*. Israel represents, rather, the point of “coalescence” for their Judaism.

The last of Ms. Schnapper’s “ideal types” are the assimilated Jews, those who neither practice their religion nor take an active part in Jewish political activities. The behavior of these assimilated Jews is similar to that of non-Jews of comparable social status. The Holocaust and the Six Day War, however, did markedly affect them. Rather than ceasing to be Jews,

Ms. Schnapper writes, the “neo-assimilated” have become more Jewish than their parents.

Does all this imply a resurgence of Jewish particularism among contemporary French Jewry? Ms. Schnapper answers in the affirmative although she finds her explanation outside of the practices and traditions of Judaism. Paradoxically, the standardization and uniformity of modern society have stimulated a revival or survival of particularism which the material prosperity, leisure time and rise in cultural level have made possible. The rediscovery and reaffirmation of Judaism, therefore, notwithstanding the uniqueness of its religious, cultural and historical dimensions, is part of a more universal phenomenon.

Ms. Schnapper carefully avoids superficial comparisons with Jewish identities in America. American readers, nevertheless, will be impressed by some striking parallels, for example the role of Israel in giving meaning and substance to the Judaism of the majority. Ms. Schnapper includes a historical dimension in her work, but here she is on less solid ground. There is a static quality to her evocation of the past and an all-too-willing dismissal of certain crucial historical events. Napoleon’s move to reorganize the Jewish population of France into communities and consistories was scarcely a “quirk of history” and their survival was not simply a “quirk of fate.” (pp. 1, lii). Both the creation and survival of the consistorial organization speak, rather, to a dominant theme in the emergence and continuity of the French state. The reality of this Jacobin centralization, moreover, most seriously challenges the diversity and particularity of the contemporary French Jewish community. The outcome and future are far from clear.

Jewish Poland As It Was

Review-Essay by LEON SHAPIRO

Culture of Compassion. By HESZEL KLEPFISZ. Translated from the Yiddish with an Introduction by Curt Leviant. New York. KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1983. xiii + 265pp.

From a Ruined Garden. The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry. Edited and translated by JACK KUGELMASS and JONATHAN BOYARIN with geographical index and bibliography by Zachary M. Baker. New York. Schocken Books, 1983. 275pp.

Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland: 1919-1939. By JOSEPH MARCUS. Berlin-New York-Amsterdam. Mouton Publishers, 1983. xi + 569pp.

IN OUR OWN TIME, IN APPROXIMATELY the first third of the 20th century, Poland was a great center of Jewish life. Together with Russia (of which it was a part up to 1918), its Jewish religious and secular creativity radiated literally throughout the Jewish world. It was all-embracing and equally powerful in the impact of the great Hasidic rebbes of all orientations and the *misnagdic* rabbis, as well as of the proponents of Yiddish secularism and Polish assimilation. It was rich in lovers of Hebrew and, in a way, was the cradle of modern Yiddish literature, Yiddish schools and theater, which flourished alongside celebrated centers of traditional learning — century old yeshivas.

Historically, most of the Jewish community grew with emigration from the West, from the German lands, and it is perhaps ironic that its end came again from Germany. What we know as the lifestyle of Polish Jewry evolved slowly from the German-Jewish pattern, brought by erst-while Jewish settlers. In the course of centuries, additions and adjustments changed the earlier foundation, bringing into play local elements from the Slavic surroundings.

The 19th century — both the Hasidic movement and the enlightenment — transformed Polish Jewry and revitalized the Polish community. It put new life and spiritual ferment in the synagogue and in the Hasidic *shtetl* and brought revolutionary spirit to the working place, where the emerging Jewish upper-class was increasingly alienated from, and distinctly inimical to, the developing Jewish proletariat.

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What happened next could not be foreseen — not only the short-lived Polish independence, but the triumph of newly formed totalitarian regimes and, finally, the horror of the Nazis, coming from the West, from Germany, from the country which had been the indisputable ideal of generations of Polish-Jewish *maskilim*. Jewish Poland practically is no more, with most of its Jews and their communal institutions — synagogues, schools, libraries and cemeteries — obliterated. But we are fortunate that, despite these immensely sad circumstances, the continuing flow of writing is producing books, by highly qualified authors, which will facilitate the efforts of present-day historians in reestablishing the authentic mode of living and the specific spirit of Polish Jewry.

Heszel Kelpfisz's volume, *Culture of Compassion*, is an important contribution and we certainly stand in his debt. It is obviously not, at least strictly technically not, a scholarly work, but, rather, a book of essays, perhaps part historical reconstruction, part remembrance of things past. Originally written in Yiddish, it is masterfully translated by Curt Leviant and gives the English reader not only the text, but the ineffable feeling of things as they were when Polish Jewry was alive and vibrant. Rabbi, teacher, a man thoroughly at home in Hebrew as well as in Yiddish letters, Kelpfisz covers the whole gamut of Jewish life in Poland.

The reader will enjoy the essay on Hasidism and the social conditions that gave birth to, and formed, this great revolution in spiritual and social Jewish life in the 18th century. What gives real excitement to this piece is the telling detail, which provides a sudden illumination to the story and gives it an immediate poignancy. Here is no textbook survey of Hasidism. The Baal-Shem Tov is quoted as saying (pointing to a scholar) "There is no soul in your manner of studying. . . ." and adding " . . . he studied so much Torah that he has actually forgotten that there is a God in this world. . . ."

There is a great generosity of spirit in Kelpfisz's examination of the Jewish past. Notwithstanding his obvious religious orientation, his references to the secular movements — to the Socialist Bund, among others — are examples of warm appreciation — indeed, piety — for all the creative forces of his people.

The pre-war Polish Jewish population — over 3,000,000 — lived throughout the length and breadth of the country in the big cities, in villages and in small towns (*shtetlakh*). The life style of Jews in Eastern Europe naturally reflected their social surrounding, the economic set-up of the region, the degree of isolation from their neighbors, etc. In this connection the reader will appreciate Kelpfisz's comment on the *shtetl*, the object of exaggerated use by a number of Jewish anthropologists, whose knowledge of Jewish life and Jewish history is rather limited.

A distorted light has recently been cast upon the *shtetl* (I refer to the Polish-Jewish *shtetl*) which is a component of East-European Jewish history. The *shtetl* is represented as a miniature world that existed cut off from the out-

side world; as a medieval institution that survived to modern times but was superannuated and moldy despite all the old-fashioned charm it was proclaimed to have. But this is far from truth. The Jewish shtetl underwent crucial changes and transformations, and in the nineteenth century (and certainly in the twentieth) it was indeed locked into general life and breathed with the outside world. (Klepfisz, who knows his history, continues) . . . I am not referring to . . . Haskala . . . and assimilation. Reb Mendele of Kotzk supported the Polish uprising against the Czarist regime in 1831 . . . [and] had to flee and hide in Austria. . . .

It is a very important and necessary correction to the exaggerated use of the *shtetl*-concept, and one hopes that it will be noticed in the scholarly community — and not be followed by “benign neglect” — at least in the foreseeable future.

There are too few survivors left in Poland of what was Polish Jewry, but, in many cities in the world, small remnants, former residents of the destroyed cities, are recording their memories of Jewish life there. We have extant literally hundreds of *yizker-bikher*, memorial books, modest witnesses of a great period in Jewish history. These books, most of them written in Yiddish, some in Hebrew, give an interesting, though unsophisticated, portrait of Jewish life as it was, before and during the destruction. Others, which are well researched and better edited, really belong to another category of writings.

Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin have done an important and very useful job in going through over sixty memorial books and selecting, translating and compiling what appears in their volume, *From a Ruined Garden*. Their work deserves our appreciation, both as a monument to our most vibrant community and perhaps, also, more immediately to the fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters of those of us who came from Polish regions.

It is a very rich collection that will surely help to bring out the facts as they really were and dispel a number of fanciful and widespread notions about Jewish life in small towns in Poland.

The book is properly divided into topical chapters — towns, townspeople, life ways, events, legends and folklore, holocaust and the return to destroyed and “*judenrein*” formerly Jewish localities. The student and the scholar will have much choice depending on their special interest. Taken at random, here are some titles of fascinating accounts: “The Jewish Porters of Warsaw” (*Pinkas Warshe*); “The Kozhenitser Rebe” (Khurban Otwock, Falenica and Karczew); “A Dispute over the Succession to the Rabbinate” (*Pinkas Chmienik*).

It will be in order, perhaps, to voice one slight caveat, which has nothing to do with the collected material, but deals, rather with the authors’ effort to put the memorial books within the framework of Jewish writings. More precisely, their inclusion of *Yeven Mezulah* of Reb Natan Hanover, as a direct prototype of later *yizker-bikher* — “. . . the work prefigures twentieth century memorial books in crucial ways . . .” — would

seem to be very problematical. Reb Natan Hanover was a rabbi, a chronicler, a well known cabbalist, and his description of the Khmelnitzki pogroms and of the *Vaad Arba Arazot* (whatever reservations a modern historian might have about this work) is not in the same category as the often untutored remembrances of survivors of these later gruesome events. There are subtle distinctions that ought to be made here — but we do not need to elaborate on this discussion, which may legitimately divide the specialists.

The history of Poland as an independent nation stopped during the partitions of 1772, 1793 and 1795. It was only one hundred and twenty-three years later, in 1918, following World War I, that Poland regained its independence for a short period of twenty-one years. In 1939 it was conquered and again partitioned — this time by Hitler Germany and Stalin Russia. Not only did the Hitler-Stalin Pact enable Nazi Germany to escape danger from the East, but Stalin sent his Red army to the Bug River to meet his Nazi ally, who was coming from the West. That was the end of Versailles-reestablished Poland.

Dr. Joseph Marcus's *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939*, as its title clearly indicates, deals with the period of Polish independence. Whatever he has to say about World War II, the events immediately preceding it, and the Nazi occupation — in the form of general remarks and a short conclusion — is important, perhaps, but should not detract from the real subject of his book: 1919-1939. Marcus has compiled a very considerable amount of useful data, his bibliography is thorough and his writing seems to be objective, at least in the sense that he is mostly critical without partisanship, critical of the right and of the left, of the Zionists and of the Bundists, and of the historians and writers who preceded him and whose work he frankly sees as inadequate. He has his pet ideas, and one of them pertains to what he calls "Jewish reformers." Who are they?

They were mostly passionate men, who greatly disliked the Jewish reality and wrote in the hope of changing it; but their work shows insufficient knowledge of contemporary facts, due partly to inadequate sources and research. Because of the common features they shared and for want of a better term I propose to refer to these leaders and writers collectively as "social reformers" (and Marcus continues) . . . although they . . . believed that improvement of their Jewish conditions can be accomplished by reform, especially by altering the Jews' occupation, the most influential of them sought to remodel the whole of Jewish society, by setting up, out of harmony with existing trends, unrealistic ideals, in the light of which they condemned both past and present Jewish standards . . .

While all the reformers understandably emphasized the discrimination against the Jews in employment, one can hardly find a single mention of the fact that hundreds of thousands of non-Jews were employed by Jews. Frequent references were made to the inferior political status of the Jews (which was in any case partly due to their leaders' internal policies), but none were made to the superior economic status of the Jews. . . . The focus

was on the wrongs committed against the Jews and on their sufferings, which connected with martyrdom — the main theme of earlier Jewish historiography . . .

Reading Dr. Marcus, it occurred to me that perhaps, as the French say, "*sa parole a dépassé sa pensée*," — and that his terminology ("reformers" and all that) is a natural reflection of the place where he works — London. Whatever it may be, Jewish historians and writers on social problems (including those who are no more with us) cannot be happy with his formulations. He is rather unsympathetic, not to say harsh, with their work, which he frankly considers mostly wanting. The reassuring and rather unexpected thing is that Marcus does acknowledge the value of the efforts of some of the "reformers," but, notwithstanding his fairness, the total effect is somehow flat.

Dr. Marcus is an economist and his emphasis is within his field of expertise. While he also devotes much space to Jewish ideologies, political parties, etc., I am not sure that he has provided us with as full a consideration of historical, social, religious and cultural factors which are, obviously, of great importance. One has the right to criticize the Jewish "reformers"; God knows that they had many dreams which did not take account of current reality. But they were not alone; as Marcus well knows, they took much of the substance of their plans and projects precisely from the surrounding society — and, in that sense, they followed the trend and did exactly what Marcus reproaches them for not having done. Again, the Jewish "reformers," quite independently of their ultimate success or failure, were the most important promoters of modernization in the stolid Jewish society. They were builders within the Jewish society of what were, in fact, elements of Jewish social power structures. Looking backward, with the benefit of hindsight, one marvels at the results of their efforts, some of which they themselves did not expect. The Jewish socialist workers' movement, the trade unions, the *kassas*, the cultural agencies, to name only a few, and even the "back to the land movement", the least successful of Jewish dreams — all these and much more, together, created an extensive Jewish social base which did, in fact, change Jewish life in the last decade of the 19th and first decades of the 20th century. It is true that not enough has been said and written about the great contribution made by the Jewish upper-class to the economic development of their society — (the present writer has written elsewhere about this aspect of our life, as Marcus notes) — but it did not and could not divert the "reformers" from pointing out the anti-Jewish discrimination in employment and the very sad conditions of the Jewish economy.

In any case, Dr. Marcus leaves us wondering how and why the Jewish leaders shared the responsibility for the inferior political status of their brothers. What did they do, or miss doing, that could have radically changed the Jewish condition? The 20th century catastrophe that befell Polish Jewry was, and is, an organic part of a general trend which started

in October 1917 in Russia, continued in Italy in 1920, went to Germany in 1932 and still represents a substantial dangerous force in our own time for the world, and, more particularly, for the Jews, precisely because of what Dr. Marcus so rightfully points out as the obvious connection between the general and the Jewish condition.

The fate of Polish Jewry was sealed and it took the Nazis three to four years to annihilate that great historic community. Given the rapidity of Hitler's penetration in both Eastern and Western Europe, was there a way out? It has been argued that if the Western Allied Countries had opened their borders great numbers of Jews *might* have been saved. Most recently, many writers have criticized the Allied Armies for their unwillingness to bomb the known locations of the death camps and thus destroy the very important communication systems that were daily bringing a fresh supply of victims. It is claimed that such bombings could have sufficiently disorganized the German death-machine and that, consequently, many Jews would not have gone up in smoke in Auschwitz. No doubt these are very serious considerations of past events, but we will have to leave it to historians to study, evaluate and perhaps give us an objective elucidation of these truly tragic might-have-beens.

Of late we have been hearing references to an interior (before the Nazi onslaught) plan, dealing with evacuation of Jews from Poland and other East-European countries — a plan already conceived in 1933 and connected with the revisionist leader, Wladimir Jabotinsky. If and when it had been applied, it would have saved a great number of Jews from what later was their horrible fate. What are the facts? Happily, Marcus provides us with a wealth of very interesting information precisely on this subject, and he treats this plan as a part of a larger discussion of the general problem of emigration.

It is known that some Polish groups (both political and social) expressed the view that there were too many Jews in Poland. The removal of substantial numbers of them from the country was a stated goal of the Polish National Democrats (Endek), who occupied a commanding position in the political structure. Obviously unwilling to treat the Jewish minority (about 10 per cent of the population) realistically and fairly, the reactionary ruling circles came up with an idea to evacuate a number of Jews to extraordinary places, including Madagascar. Responsible local Jewish leaders were very careful with respect to such "far-reaching plans," asking why Jews should leave their land; why they should be singled out and treated in a "special way." The truth is that nobody could at that time think the unthinkable. Anti-Jewish bias, yes; anti-Jewish pogroms, yes; but the horror that came later, could not have foreseen by people in their right minds.

It so happened that, during the same period, Jabotinsky came up with a plan, specifically to promote the evacuation of 1,500,000 Jews, half of them from Poland, within the ten-year period from 1936-1946. Polish

ruling circles gave it a particularly warm welcome since the proposal corresponded with the open wishes of the anti-Jewish Polish elite. Marcus tells us that in Warsaw, at a press conference held on September 9, 1936, Jabotinsky informed all concerned that the question of “unloading the ghetto was a state necessity for Poland.” Perhaps Jabotinsky’s style and his penchant for strong rhetoric explains the unfortunate statement, but it was very much in the line of anti-Jewish slogans currently fostered by the Endeks.

There is no need to go into the whole business of the rapport between the Zionist Revisionists and the Polish Foreign Ministry. It is an interesting subject, — and Dr. Marcus devotes much to it. He even writes about the “ideological affinity. . . . between the two partners to the Alliance.” We must remember that such radical proposals were in line with Jabotinsky’s thinking; he was, in fact, one of the last Jewish romantics, harking back to Garibaldi, and a simpler world of 19th century national movements. Though he was a great orator and an excellent journalist, his political rhetoric was often completely outside the social reality of Jewish life. He favored theatrical *faits accomplis*. He split the Zionist movement and founded his own NZO — New Zionist Organization — which had to have innovative programs and whose politics had to be of a more “activist” character. In Jabotinsky’s mind, his “evacuation” plan was closely connected with the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine — to which some of the Jews would have to go.

For our purposes it is sufficient to say that nothing practical came out of this whole affair. Let me again quote Marcus:

In May 1939 at a press conference in Warsaw, Jabotinsky admitted that his evacuation plan had failed, as if this had ever been in question. But while the “plan” had failed, it had not been a “failure”; for it had never been more than a slogan, and this had been a success. But by the spring of 1939, the slogan was worn out and ready for the dustbin.

So much for this plan, which some now claim could have been the way of salvation in the years preceding the horror. There is very little that one can add to Dr. Marcus’s description — it was only a slogan. Migratory movements have played a great role in Jewish history, but one must distinguish between emigration and evacuation, particularly when the latter is favored by an anti-Semitic government. One should also take into account the general conditions under which the proposed departures would have taken place. These are not simple questions, and all the aspects of this situation will be on the agenda of Jewish historians for a long time.

Chosenness On Our Mind

Review-Essay by JONATHAN D. SARNA

The Chosen People in America: A Study in Jewish Religious Ideology. By ARNOLD M. EISEN. Bloomington, Indiana. Indiana University Press. 237 pp., \$17.50.

JEWISH RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN AMERICA is “sadly neglected,” observes Gershon Greenberg in a recent bibliographical essay. “There is no history, journal, undergraduate course or academic position in the area.” Greenberg lists numerous studies of individual American Jewish thinkers and a few casual surveys of modern Jewish thought, but no full-scale histories of ideas and no systematic treatments of ideas in context. There is, he rightly notes, “a chronic absence of attention to sources.”¹

Arnold Eisen’s masterful study, based almost entirely on primary sources, is a pioneering attempt to rescue American Jewish thought from this neglect. Rather than concentrating on any one thinker, Eisen boldly sets out to examine how a variety of thinkers — great and not-so-great — tackled what he calls “the essential dilemma facing American Jews”: the problem of chosenness. As he poses it, the conflict over whether to remain apart as a “chosen people” or to participate fully in American life could hardly be more stark:

To abandon the claim to chosenness would be to discard the *raison d’être* that had sustained Jewish identity and Jewish faith through the ages, while to make the claim was to question or perhaps even to threaten America’s precious offer of acceptance (p. 4).

The solutions offered by Jewish thinkers in America naturally looked toward neither extreme, seeking instead compromise, a middle ground where Jewish identity and American patriotism could coexist.

Eisen seems to have devoured almost everything worth reading on the subject of “Israel’s election.” At the same time, and unlike most writers in the field, he has equipped himself to speak knowledgeably about the larger currents of both Jewish and American thought. He has also acquired sufficient familiarity with history and the social sciences to place the ideas he describes in context, and to describe their function. But he does not allow his vast research to obscure the larger significance of his

1. Gershon Greenberg, “The Pattern in Study of American Jewish Religious Thought,” *Studies In Bibliography and Booklore*, 14 (1982): 29-40.

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subject. After the dust has settled over the greater and lesser minds who grappled with the chosen people problem, Eisen remains in touch with his central thesis:

[C]hosenness preoccupied American Jewish thinkers because it was essential to their maturing definition of who and what American Jews were. They would not be mere Americans — but, as part of the chosen people, would somehow stand apart. Yet they would be Americans — and if chosenness involved more exclusivity, a more demanding covenant, or a more avowedly elitist mission than was compatible with being Americans, then chosenness would have to be reinterpreted. So it was (p. 173).

Evaluations of the three principal American Jewish efforts to reinterpret chosenness form the core of this book. Chapters devoted to Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservative Jewish ideas carefully describe and painstakingly analyze half a century of systematic and non-systematic thinking on the subject produced both by members of the so-called “Second Generation” (1930-1955), and by those of the “Third Generation” (1955-1980).

The three approaches to chosenness turn out to display far less development over time than one might have expected. Debate in Reform circles has continually centered around Judaism’s “mission unto the nations.” Reconstructionists, following Mordecai Kaplan, have repudiated the chosen people concept altogether in favor of the idea of Judaism as “vocation or calling.” And Conservative Jewish thinkers, at least in Eisen’s view, have merely “practiced and repracticed the art of cautious reaffirmation through manifold reinterpretation. They ended up nowhere in particular, but somewhere in-between” (p. 99). Since Orthodox spokesmen often ignored the problem of chosenness, being “largely immune to the external pressures upon chosenness that affected other movements,” Eisen considers them only briefly. He fixes his central focus squarely on those caught up in the tension between being Jewish and being American, not those who have evaded it.

Although not central to Eisen’s analysis, change over time does play some part in it. He feels that “Second Generation” American Jewish thinkers of all persuasions applied themselves to apologetics, gushing forth with expressions of love for everything American, and always looking to find new opportunities to prove the utter compatibility of “Judaism and Democracy,” “Sinai and Washington,” and “Jewish and American values.” By the “Third Generation” he finds that this wholehearted embrace of America had been withdrawn and, in its place,

Jewish intellectuals seized on the traditional vocabulary of chosenness and exile in order to articulate their distance from American middle-class culture and from the Jewish community which had adopted that culture (p. 147).

But if chosenness no longer proved an embarrassment to American Jews, they did not, according to Eisen, suddenly revert en masse to a position of

Jewish apartness. Instead, to use his unabashedly Protestant term, the Jewish covenant with America became “a halfway covenant,” as did the Jewish covenant with Judaism. Jews sought to protect both of their identities, hoping for some future synthesis.

The boldness and breadth of this study bid fair to raise some exciting controversies. Eisen spares few major Jewish thinkers and no modern Jewish religious movement. One after another, he strips bare each major solution offered to the problems posed by chosenness, exposing its weaknesses for all to see. To be sure, Eisen is better at tearing down than at building up. Some thinkers deserve more credit than he gives them. But to deal here with all of the many issues that he raises would be impossible. In what follows, therefore, I shall limit my criticisms to the three that seem to me to be of particular importance.

(1) Eisen begins his study in 1930 on the argument that it was then (ca. 1930-1955) “that American Jewry and Judaism as we know them took shape” (p. 4). He defends his date on the basis of such developments as the 1937 Columbus Platform adopted by the Reform Movement, and the founding of Reconstructionism by Mordecai Kaplan. In making such a claim, however, he reveals a modernist and East European bias that causes him to overlook developments in the nineteenth century. Like far too many other American Jewish historians, he assumes, quite wrongly, that significant American Jewish history began only with mass East European Jewish immigration in 1881. In fact, American Judaism as we know it — with three major branches and various minor movements struggling for recognition — took shape no later than the 1870s. By century’s end, discussion had begun on almost all of the key theological and ritual controversies that convulsed American Judaism before the Holocaust, certainly the question of chosenness. Indeed, many of the positions that Eisen characterizes as beginning in the 1930s merely echoed earlier statements by luminaries of the previous era. That important developments took place in the twentieth century cannot be doubted, nor can Eisen be faulted for selecting the half century just past for analysis, rather than some earlier period. But by minimizing the nineteenth century roots of twentieth century discussions he does fall victim to what David H. Fischer calls “the telescopic fallacy.”² He makes a long story short, forgets distant origins, and thus misleadingly transforms an enduring theme in American Jewish intellectual history into one that seems to be of only recent vintage.

(2) Eisen organizes his book on the basis of what he calls “generational terminology,” the now standard sociological division of American Jews by generation of nativity. He devotes one part of his work to the “Second Generation,” one part to the “Third.” But where previous studies of the “second generation” — notably Deborah Dash Moore’s *At Home In*

2. David H. Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies* (New York, 1970), pp. 147-149.

America — actually focused on those whose parents had been immigrants, Eisen does not. His “second generation” figures include both those who were themselves born abroad, like Mordecai Kaplan and Samuel Schulman, and those, like Joshua Loth Liebman, who descended from families already several generations in America. As for his “third generation” figures, a very high percentage of them, including Jacob Agus, Emil Fackenheim, Frederic Doppelt, Arthur Hertzberg, Jakob Petuchowski, and W. Gunther Plaut fall by most normal definitions into the “first generation” category — a phenomenon, incidentally, that deserves to be studied.

Eisen himself recognizes this problem. He frankly admits that “the generational terminology employed throughout this work is in one sense misleading and unjustified” (p. 8). But he uses the terminology, anyway, on the theory that

the phrases “second” and “third generation” denote a period and its population regardless of whether a particular thinker who joined in its debates and was subject to its influence was biologically its native son in the strict sense of the term (p. 9).

Hardly convincing. As far as I can tell, the American Jewish population has never been as homogeneous in generational terms as he imagines. Various studies in the late 1930s found that about 23% of American Jewish families were third generation or more³ — this at the time when, according to him, the “second generation” was only starting to make itself felt! Periodizing according to pseudo-generations, rather than according to standard socio-historical criteria, thus obscures far more than it reveals. American Jewish intellectual history needs a proper periodization scheme of its own.

(3) Finally, a word must be said about Eisen’s analysis of “Reform Judaism and the ‘Mission Unto the Nations.’” As usual, the sources he cites are fascinating. They trace better than anyone has before the real dilemma that American Reform Jews faced when their interpretation of chosenness as Israel’s “mission” fell victim, on the one hand, to charges of elitism and, on the other, to charges that Israel’s “universalistic mission” contained far too little that was specifically Jewish in character. But Eisen is wrong in assuming that the problem was unique to Reform. The idea that God

has chosen us as His peculiar people, *to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation* . . . an example unto the Gentile world of a life lived in God — upright, just and kind⁴

is also found in avowedly Orthodox works, in this case Leo Jung’s widely read “Jewish Library” volume on *Faith*. Michael Meyer’s observation on the “mission of Israel” theme in Europe applies to America as well:

3. Sophia M. Robison (ed.), *Jewish Population Studies* (New York, 1943), pp. 63, 94, 156.

4. Leo Jung (ed.), *Faith* (New York, 1968), p. 19, cf. p. 61.

This doctrine was not characteristic only of Reform. It was jointly held by various branches of modern Judaism, and should be ascribed more to the general process of Jewish integration into surrounding society than to the peculiarities of Reform Jewish ideology.⁵

Eisen seems to me to be equally wrong in his functional analysis of the “mission of Israel” theme. While I can only applaud his view that “American Jewish thought on election should be understood as ‘religious ideology’ rather than theology,” and that as such it gave “meaning to those who created and received it in the particular context of their time and place” (pp. 8-9), I am unpersuaded that the *sole* function of “mission” was “to link the political and social commitments of Reform Jews to the demands of Jewish tradition” (p. 71). Certainly, Reform Jewish liberalism did legitimate itself on the basis of Israel’s “prophetic mission,” but the ideology served other imperative needs as well.

First of all, the mission of Israel justified Reform Judaism’s opposition to intermarriage. Instead of having to resort to “tribalistic” or “chauvinistic” reasons for supporting endogamy, Reform leaders could appeal to high-minded ideals, “love being triumphed over by duty.”⁶ An intermarrying Jew was, so to speak, abandoning the battle in mid-course. Jews who did marry Jews, by contrast, were guaranteeing that Israel would be able to carry on its “vital mission” for yet one generation more. Second, the “mission of Israel” served as an effective anti-Christian polemic. For centuries, Christians had pointed to the Jewish diaspora as evidence that Israel labored under a Divine curse owing to its mistreatment of Christianity’s founder. Now Jews had an answer: “We do not look upon this dispersion as a curse; on the contrary, we regard it as a blessing — a blessing for you and all mankind.”⁷ “Mission” thus served a myriad of ideological functions. To view it, as Eisen does, only in one dimensional terms is, it seems to me, to miss the point entirely.

If Eisen is not at his best in his analysis of Reform, he more than compensates elsewhere, offering brilliant insights, luminous quotations, and acute criticisms, all set forth in memorable prose. Faults, omissions and misinterpretations flaw all great works, and this one is no exception. In the final analysis, however, *The Chosen People In America* must rank among the most important volumes ever written on American Jewish religious thought. No serious student of the subject can afford to ignore it.

5. Michael A. Meyer, “Concerning D.R. Schwartz: ‘History and Historiography — “A Kingdom of Priests” as Pharisaic Slogan,’” *Zion* 46 (1981): 58 [translation mine]; cf. Max Wiener, “The Conception of Mission in Traditional and Modern Judaism,” *YIVO Annual* 2-3 (1947-48), pp. 23-24.

6. Samuel Schulman (1909) quoted in W. Gunther Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism* (New York, 1965), p. 256.

7. Bernhard Felsenthal, *The Wandering Jew: A Statement to a Christian Audience, of the Jewish View of Judaism* (Chicago, 1872), p. 5.

Lions at Two A.M.

The Collected Poems of Rose Drachler.
Ed. by Jacob Drachler. New York.
Assembling Press, 1983. 287 pp.

Reviewed by BERNHARD FRANK

ROSE DRACHLER died of cancer on July 10, 1982; she was seventy-one years old. It was only in the last twenty years of her life that she applied herself seriously to the writing of poetry and published two volumes: *Burrowing In, Digging Out* (1974) and *The Choice* (1977). The present volume, edited by her husband, was published posthumously.

Mrs. Drachler had studied with the noted American poet, John Ashberry, and her diaries, sections of which are interspliced with her poems, abound with references to him — references that border on idolatry. Her self-concept, on the other hand, emerges from both diaries and poems as most unassuming, and her few flashes of *hubris* are dissipated just as soon as they surface:

I do not think that I write for honor, although there is some question about that. Perhaps beneath the surface, where I have these vain longings. Yes, certainly such feelings are there, or were. Why do I try so hard to get published from time to time? But then I draw back and try to be a private person, serving my family and friends and just writing as a kind of compulsion, when the fit is on me.

And when the fit is on her she perceives the world with a refreshing lack of preconceptions — she is receptive to her surroundings and employs her precise yet mellow vocabulary to define them. "Turn on the faucet and wet everything with its own name," she writes in "Entrance To the Apple Orchard." She does not take the names of things for granted — without them

there can be no experience, no memory; and "the end of naming" is death. Although the *idea* is hardly new, the *blending* of idea and imagination, of sensory objects, feelings and thoughts, weaves a quiet, loving tapestry. In her diary she wrote:

I am particularly interested in silence. When I write poetry I start with three or so pages and work back to less and less of a statement, trying to include the spirit of what I wrote, in as small a compass as is possible, using the quietest words or no words at all.

In "The Signs, the Words," Drachler examines the different connotations that language holds for men and women:

... there is only difference
between us
"Lamb," you say, and lick your lips
"Clouds," I dream, and picture
lambs
Leaping straight up
The signs, the words are the same
For us both

No feminist lecture this, only example; the readers may draw their own conclusions.

Rose Drachler's keen powers of observation, dressed in wry understatement, remind one of Emily Dickinson at her whimsical best, and foreshadow the work of the contemporary Israeli poet, Zfirah Gar:

There is a listening the inchworm
does
With his advancing foot
Trying the air around a leaf
For possibility

she writes in "Inchworm." And when, in the mysterious "Joy In the Desert," she speaks of breathing "lions at two A.M.," one is reminded of Dickinson's identification with the wild beast in "A Dying Tiger — Moaned For Drink."

In the same poem we see Drachler's ambivalent relationship to God whom she alternately reveres

—“... your mane is in my nose/ I breathe it golden/ airy” — and derides — “I am up yours Lord.” In “Collage” she describes God wryly as the artist who creates a patchwork called Intermarriage.

Far from all, however, is whimsy. “When I Pushed You Away Weeping” is a haunting recapitulation of a miscarriage that has all the power, if none of the artifice, of Anne Sexton’s “Abortion”:

When you floated in my sea
and the surf pounded
so it shook your sheltered flesh
what frightened you?

she asks the lost fetus.

And, indeed, death is a focal point in Drachler’s poems. In “The End Of Her Verse,” a prose elegy for a child, life is seen as an Oriental illumination on a page, and whatever is outside that page is death. One of the last poems in the book, “Amulet Against Cancer,” succeeds where the amulet has failed:

... You must learn
How to live in my house
With me

she says to the cancer, as we now know, it did, and ultimately, sadly, evicted her.

At its best, Rose Drachler’s

poetry is transcendental — rising up from earth toward heaven, reaching beyond death to eternity. At its best, it is a seamless meshing of feeling, thought and imagination. Not all of the poems can, of course, be equally successful, and this unevenness is highlighted by the over-ambitious editing. The book is arranged in reverse chronology (from late to early) and according to themes. Consequently, many of the best poems occur early on in the book, in the meditative section and, within sections, the pieces tend to get weaker as we read on. The diary selections are similarly frustrating in that they, too, are thematic excerpts. I would have much preferred to read the poems in the order of their composition, from early to late, and certainly the diaries appear interesting enough to warrant publication in a separate volume.

Nevertheless, Rose Drachler’s radiance as a poet overrides the editorial bumbling, and the gold nuggets scattered throughout the book are well worth digging for.

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A Footnote on Early Zionism

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

The article (Summer 1984) by Monty N. Penkower, "Religious Forerunners of Zionism," is so good that it impels me to offer serious criticism — not in disparagement but with a desire to supply the one thing needed to fill in the vacuum of this well-written article.

No mention is made of the great Talmudical scholar from Silesia, Emanuel Deutsch... who came to London to work at the British Museum. He became acquainted with George Eliot, to whom he gave Hebrew lessons. Before dying in Alexandria, Egypt, on his way to Palestine, in 1873, he supplied her with the information that she used in writing her proto-Zionist novel, *Daniel Deronda*, published in 1876. Since this took place in the period covered by Penkower's article, it is a grave omission to say not a word about either Deutsch or George Eliot. There is much more to be said on this subject (e.g., Was Deutsch Orthodox? Was he proto-Zionist?), but I shall stop here, and leave the rest for a possible postscript.

Baltimore, Md.

BENJAMIN SZOLD LEVIN



Humanity is Bisexual

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

It is only recently that I have had the opportunity to read your Fall 1983 issue featuring "Homosexuals and Homosexuality." My reactions... ranged from disappointment to admiration. However, there were a number of things which disturbed me, and most of them had to do with what was ignored or assumed.

The first of these is the assumption... that the phrase "homosexual lifestyle" carries some meaningful information. What is such a phrase supposed to mean? Does anyone speak

of a heterosexual lifestyle which all of the married and unmarried couples are busily pursuing day in and day out? If I tell you that both Rabbi X and I have a heterosexual lifestyle, what significant information does that give you about the way we live and spend our time, energy, and money? Gay and lesbian people have jobs, prepare meals, commute, vote, and attend board meetings just like anyone else.

Most scholars and thinkers tend to speak of homosexuality or heterosexuality in mutually exclusive terms. There is an unwillingness or inability to acknowledge that only in the recent past (100-150 years) has the term or concept of "homosexuality" arisen, and only much later, that of "heterosexuality."¹ These terms are part of the attempt to institute and legitimate modern scientific categories, and to evolve a jargon to explain Freudian psychological theory.

While some experts estimate that only a small percentage of homosexuals are exclusively homosexual (figures indicate this to be 4% among men and 2% among women), this reality is usually ignored and the import of humanity's essential bisexuality is lost. Relatively recent developments in scientific frames of reference, and the trend which includes diagnosing acts of sexuality in terms of a condition, have had a tremendous impact on making "homosexuality" a "problem."

From the work of scholars such as Boswell,² it has become quite apparent that gay and lesbian sex was not an either/or matter for many people throughout history, aside from prolonged periods in homosocial surroundings (religious orders, prisons, military service). It was another option in addition to marital or non-marital heterosexual coupling.

Gay and lesbian love took place among Jews as well as among gentiles. It does not take tortuous reading to see Biblical allusions in the narrative of David and Jonathan, Moshe ibn Ezra and Abraham ibn Ezra, to name but two illustrious Jews of medieval times,

wrote love poetry to male youths. Judah Halevi himself wrote "poetry and epigrams to beautiful boys and even transformed a heterosexual Arabic poetic jest into a homosexual one. . . ."³ In addition, Boswell's scholarship . . . indicates strong parallels between oppression of gays and lesbians, and of Jews, alternating with periods of toleration of both groups.

While we can find passages that purport to condemn gay sex in Jewish sources, they are open to multiple interpretations. In addition, we can find many passages that condemn a host of other practices that continue unabated today without the same degree of communal disapproval or revulsion. Sabbath desecrators are not treated like gay and lesbian Jews. *Tref* eaters sit on the highest levels of Jewish religious and communal governing bodies . . . Couples with no children or one child are accorded more *kavod*, despite their "survival threatening lifestyle" than is given to their gay or lesbian counterparts with two, three, or more children. From what Walter Wurzburger says, gay and lesbian Jews should not be treated any differently than these abovementioned types who fail to live up to all the *mitzvot*. If Nathaniel Lehrman would read contemporary scholarship, he would see that Christian and Islamic tradition do not monolithically . . . frown upon homosexuality, but abound with gay and lesbian love poetry and references to gay and lesbian relationships in factual, nonderogatory ways.

Forums like yours are giving people an opportunity to share their concerns and views. I would suggest that the scope of what is to be examined is in need of being greatly broadened.

Cotati, Cal. THOMAS M. HERZ

1. Jay Paul, "The Bisexual Identity," *The Bi-Monthly* 8 (July-August 1984): 4.

2. John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago, Ill., The University of Chicago Press, 1980).

3. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

More on Maimonides

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

Aryeh Botwinick's article on "Maimonides' Messianic Age" in the Fall 1984 issue I found very original and thorough. While it is convincing in terms of the de-miraclicization of Messiah in the Maimonidean approach, I do wish to point to a glaring contradiction to the "continuity of pre-Messianic and Messianic times" as found, not in Rambam's philosophy or in *Sefer Hamada*, but in his *Sefer Hamizvot*, as supplemented in his Code.

I refer to the fact that Maimonides does not list the obligation to conquer the land and live in it as one of the 613 *mitzvot*. There is a lengthy debate on the subject in the *Sefer Hamizvot* between Nachmanides, who does list the obligation as a *mizvah* and *Taanit Esther* who defends the view of Rambam. This defense is based on the assumption that before the Messianic Age the *mizvah* of *kibbush*, *yishuv haarez*, the settlement in the land of Israel, is simply not feasible, and, therefore, cannot be counted as a *mizvah leodorot*, a commandment unlimited in time; it is, rather, a *horaat shaah*, a temporary commandment restricted to the time of Joshua and Ezra.

On the other hand, in contradiction to the notion of a "natural" and historical Messiah, the conquest and settlement of the land would simply be a link in the chain of events in a normal series. It would be as applicable during the days of Galuth as in the days of Joshua and Ezra. This glaring omission in the halakic structure of Rambam, which he took pains to formulate with great precision, writing the *Sefer Hamizvot* as a preliminary skeleton upon which to hang his great Code, cannot be attributed to a lack of Zionist concern alone. It indicates a fundamental non-naturalistic or supernaturalistic approach to Messiah.

What compounds the mystery is that Maimonides does list the building of the Temple, the establishment of the monarchy, and the eradication of Amalek as permanent commandments

and lists them among the 613. It is as if they are all suspended but theoretically applicable, waiting only upon the prerequisite, the miraculous coming of the Messiah. He alone would trigger the process of restoration and set the entire machinery in motion once again.

It is also astonishing that the Rambam, the mystic, the holder of super-supernaturalistic notions of Messiah and *Olom Habah*, does consider *yishuv haaretz* as a practical *mizvah ledorot*.

Halifax, Nova Scotia

JACOB CHINITZ



Reform and Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

As one who has been actively involved in the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism for the last twenty years, there is much I can agree with and endorse in Rabbi Haberman's perceptive article, "The Reform Rabbinate and Israel" (Summer 1984). Nevertheless, it contains some important points which should not remain unchallenged.

The "intellectual foundations of European Reform are irrelevant to the Israeli Jew and it is this irrelevance, rather than official bureaucratic intolerance, which stands in the way of Reform's expansion." Yes, but . . . The historical foundations of European Reform bother only few people, precisely because they are irrelevant. What does concern us is the intellectual irrelevance of present-day Reform theology, with its blind insistence on a personal and responsive God, despite all the evidence to the contrary. It is not that "our existential need for faith in God is far greater than are the reservations of skeptical rationalism." On the contrary, our existential need is for a sense of identity with our cultural heritage, and it is the presumed necessary link between that heritage and faith in God that stands in the way of

any religious involvement and commitment.

In helping to prepare our new prayerbook, *Ha'Avodah SheBalev* (which, by the way, is not a revision of Reform liturgy in America or England), I tried to persuade the liturgy committee to articulate a new theological approach that would be more responsive to modern atheistic and agnostic thought. Unfortunately, and perhaps also predictably, this effort met only with very limited success, due to the trained incapacity of most rabbis to think rationally about the God concept. But it is my conviction that unless and until such a new theology is not only formulated, but also presented in plain Hebrew to the Israeli citizenry, any serious commitment to Reform is unlikely.

But there is another, more prosaic reason for the Reform Movement's lack of progress in Israel, and the exceptions point to the rule. The Leo Baeck School in Haifa and Kibbutz Yahel have got off the ground because those in the Movement directly responsible for these ventures have succeeded in inspiring American Reform Jews sufficiently to give them the necessary financial support. The rest of the Movement in Israel lives on hand-outs of peanuts and tries to build itself on its own meagre resources. If the so-called *Baalei Teshuvah* movement is relatively successful, despite its limited appeal to a lunatic fringe, and despite the desecration and perversion of a sacred moral concept implicit in its name, it is not because Israelis are looking for a faith, but because massive amounts of money are being poured into it. Unless and until American Reform Jewry rallies to the support of the Movement in Israel in a similar manner, that Movement will not only stagnate, but die out. So the sages were right: *Im eyn Torah, eyn kemah; im eyn kemah, eyn Torah*.

As for the rest, I could not agree with Rabbi Haberman more.

Haifa, Israel

CHANOCH JACOBSEN

BOOKS RECEIVED

November, 1984 through February 15, 1985

Listing of a book does not preclude its being reviewed in a subsequent issue of JUDAISM

Autobiography and Biography

- Goldschmidt, D., ed. *Leiden an der Unerlöstheit der Welt. Robert Raphael Geis, 1906-1972*. Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1984. 399 pp.
- Goldstein, Israel. *My World as a Jew*. 2 vols. New York: Herzl Press, 1984. 353 and 413 pp., \$45.00 (set).
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